

Encounter

Edited by **STEPHEN SPENDER & MELVIN J. LASKY**

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Six Poems

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MONTHLY 4s.

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OUR SITUATION

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Encounter

Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER and MELVIN J. LASKY

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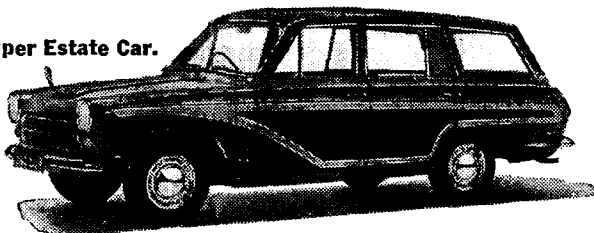
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John Wain

Our Situation

*Everybody takes sides in social change
if it is profound enough.*
WALLACE STEVENS

Nos avons droit mais cist gloton ont tort.
LE CHANSON DE ROLAND

AN ENGLISHMAN'S thoughts on Europe do not necessarily change with every cloud that passes over the political sky. Two months ago, when it seemed likely that Britain was about to be accepted, finally, as a European country, we all found ourselves thinking, frequently and with a sense of urgency, about the whole ancient question of the confrontation of this country with the Continent. And, though General de Gaulle has now acted decisively and destructively to rescue his concept of a *Europe des Patries* from the dustbin into which British entry would sooner or later have tipped it—though the prospect of integration with Europe is once again a distant one—one does not (unless one happens to be a daily journalist who must think of news as something that happens one day at a time) switch one's attention elsewhere. The thought of a united Western Europe that included Britain, so exhilaratingly close and now so chillingly thrust into the future, is not one that fades quickly. The questions we have been pondering in the last twelve months are not suddenly obsolete. In a world where no nation can stand by itself, where does England's allegiance lie? Are we North-Western Europeans, separated from the mainland by a symbolic strip of ocean and a specialised political tradition? Or are we a different breed, committed for ever to keeping a watchful eye on European developments while maintaining closer links with countries far more distant—America, Australia, our former dependencies in Asia?

The problem cannot be settled by the usual English method of leaving it to the experts. It concerns everyone who is capable of thinking and feeling, because it is at bottom a question of identity. Who are we? Whom do we belong with? Setting aside our immediate problems of

self-interest, we ought to be looking closely at ourselves, under the skin, inside the skull. "What is your substance, whereof are you made?" Since we must choose, which choice will enable us to live most fully the life that is truly ours? Does the idea of a Commonwealth, cemented by Royal tours, really release our (or anyone else's) potentialities? Would the harsh, dry air of European realism kill us or brace us to a more vigorous life? These are large general questions, which fatally invite woffling and rhetoric; but, on the other hand, they are questions on which a private citizen, with no special sources of information and nothing personally at stake, can—and ought to—have opinions.

A European Community which included the United Kingdom would have made large and immediate gains in political stability, in tolerance, in respect for the rights of the individual, and therefore in happiness. That, briefly, is what I shall maintain. But first, an admission. When, the other day, I was aggressively lecturing an intelligent Continental on the virtues of British pragmatism, and the freedom we gained from being independent of theories and schematic thinking, he replied, with quiet but deadly destructiveness, that we were in our present position exactly because we had failed to join our European neighbours in a notable piece of pragmatism. When, all those years ago, a start had been made towards European unity—a pragmatic start, with the Coal and Steel Community and Euratom—we had stood aloof. This is true, and we might as well begin by admitting it. The reason Britain is out in the cold to-day is because, at a time when the Continental nations were taking the kind of action we had always urged them to take, were showing the kind of concreteness we had always thought a typically English gift, we chose that moment to stick our heads in the sand-bucket. It may be General de Gaulle's fault that our entry into Europe has been blocked this time, but it is our own fault that we were in a position where he could do this to us.

Nevertheless, the day-to-day situation is one thing and the stately movements of history another. We failed to join in with Europe ten years ago; now we have tried and been checkmated by one man's will; perhaps in five years' time we shall get another chance and miss it again, through our own stupidity or someone else's. But there is, it seems to me, no mistaking the direction in which, quickly or slowly, we shall move. I can't estimate the tempo of events, but I am sure Britain will end up as part of a federal Europe, and I expect to see it in my lifetime.

BEFORE THE DISCOVERY of the New World, and with Africa and the East largely inaccessible, the English naturally turned to the Continent of Europe when they wanted a larger horizon. The medieval mind is very difficult for a modern person to understand, but as far as one can see it looks as if the Englishman of, say, Chaucer's day had no great sense of being "different" from the Continental. Nationalism in the modern sense was not, in any case, very strong, except among groups who lived close enough together to irritate and challenge one another, like the Scots and the English. The English were subject to outbreaks of jealous rage against certain foreign groups who demonstrably competed in profitable fields of trade (the Flemings, for instance), but on the whole the Englishman had not developed his sense of superiority towards foreigners; he shared most of his assumptions (including, of course, his Catholic religion) with Europe, and was glad of any give and take that came his way. In those days, Europe was seen quite simply as a market. The Hundred Years' War, for instance, had popular backing because it was a drive towards better trade outlets. As H. A. L. Fisher summed it up, "The burden of heavy taxation was offset for the commonalty of our island not only by the glamour of foreign conquest, but by the conviction that the war was good for trade, that it enabled England to sell her wool in Bruges and Ghent, to buy her wine from Bordeaux, and to find a Continental market for her tin, her iron, and her hides." English eyes remained fixed on the Continent till well into modern times, and even the idea of a Continental Empire did not finally crumble until we had to give back Calais in the sixteenth century.

By that time, however, two major shifts had taken place. Protestantism had made the English feel different from many of their most important

European neighbours, and the discovery of a new continent across the Atlantic (rapidly being explored by the western seaboard nations, of which England was one) had made the European land-mass seem less interesting as a field for ambition.

During the eighteenth century, the Old Tory view of a self-sustaining Little England, with an economy controlled by the government and based largely on agriculture, gave way—not peaceably, but in a series of political upheavals—to the expansionist mercantile imperialism which demanded unlimited horizons plus military protection in all parts of the world. The chief spokesmen for this new attitude were men like Pitt, whose family had been enriched by East India trade; its chief opponents men like Samuel Johnson, who distrusted colonialism on moral grounds and had no love for the idea of England as the world's dominant trading power, guarding its markets by means of the army and navy. It was Pitt's view, of course, that prevailed, especially after he had guided England to victory in the Seven Years' War and thereby laid the foundations of the British Empire. Europe, during this process, offered nothing but competition and hindrances. Hence the British policy of the balance of power, developed during the eighteenth century and not finally abandoned till 1914. It suited our interests for Continental nations to fight among themselves, and by supporting the weaker side we could usually ensure that no one power ever became so dominant as to unify Europe against us. Napoleon nearly proved this theory wrong, but at the last minute the luck ran our way.

I HAVE BEEN TALKING as if British policy was motivated simply by cynicism and self-interest, but actually I believe the truth was more complex. The desire to support the weaker side, the instinct to identify with the underdog rather than the top dog, was bound up with the whole English cult of fair play ("cricket," etc.) which grew up between—roughly—1750 and 1850. To most foreign observers, this cult has always seemed mere buncombe and hypocrisy, as it has to non-conformists at home. Certainly there are enough black spots on the English record, both at home and overseas, to show that self-interest was firmly enough in the saddle; yet there is, and remains, a streak of idealism in the English, and most foreign failures to assess England result from leaving this streak out of account. The English tempera-

ment is baffling to Continental Europeans because it is both pragmatic and down-to-earth, distrusting theories and 'isms, and also up in the clouds of idealism. I am talking, of course, of the English temperament at its best. At its worst it is hideous, with a combination of cruel selfishness with pious hymn-singing that no Continental would sink to.

At all events, it was during the period that began with the relinquishing of Calais, and ended with the disaster of 1914, that the English defined and hardened their differences from the Continental Europeans. In politics and trade, the "far-flung" Empire seemed a better bet than entrenched, overcrowded Europe; in social manners, the Continent was not hypocritical enough for us during our period of black Puritanism; and as regards everything that pertains to "culture," anything like a full give-and-take was hampered by the English class system.

WHAT I MEAN by that last remark is simply that, whereas a fourteenth-century Englishman approached the Continent directly if he approached it at all, a nineteenth-century Englishman looked at it through class spectacles. The nearest Continental country in the geographical sense happened by an unlucky chance to be the furthest away psychologically and culturally. French is not a very difficult language to pick up if you start early enough or if you happen to have been given some grounding in Latin, but to the unschooled Englishman, particularly if he meets it in adult life, it is virtually unlearnable and certainly unpronounceable. Some degree of ease and familiarity with France, and thence the Continent as a whole, thus became a class badge. The moment at which this feeling begins, I think can be pin-pointed in the late seventeenth century. During the Commonwealth interregnum, the supporters of Charles I had taken refuge in large numbers at the French court; when they returned with Charles II in 1660, they brought with them cultural and social attitudes picked up in France, and in the minds of the populace at large the association of the Continent

with a Frenchified upper class took root. Certainly English literature was reorganised along class lines in the Restoration period. A writer like Bunyan carries over a great deal from a tradition that has popular, Elizabethan roots, whereas the comedies of Congreve, for instance, owe very little to anything written before 1645 and in general have an imported flavour. It is significant that there is no such division in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, which divides up simply into popular and learned. Only after 1660 do we find that association of the governing class with a Continental culture and the bulk of the people aggressively xenophobic. Elizabethan drama was a popular (to speak more strictly, a classless) art, yet when Shakespeare put on a play (*Henry V*) containing a good deal of dialogue in French, it does not appear that anyone called him a snob.

DURING the nineteenth century, attitudes on both sides hardened until it became accepted, both by Englishmen and Continentals, that the English were a different breed who lived by different assumptions. (Kipling's line about "Lesser breeds without the law," which many people still take to refer to the dark-skinned races, is in fact a swipe at the Germans.) Enriched by the revenues of a huge empire, enclosed in a blubber-envelope of Philistinism, the English became the most insular people in history.* For three centuries, England had been drifting further away from any sense of participation in Europe. Only the intelligentsia were European in spirit; and if the intelligentsia took the slightest trouble to make their point of view attractive and intelligible to the rest of the nation, all one can say is that they failed so completely that there are not even any traces of the effort.

The smash-up of 1914-18, naturally, did nothing to make this situation any better. The common Englishman, who had never in modern times been encouraged to visit the Continent or to take any interest in it, who had never been taught Continental languages or introduced to Continental food or clothes or customs, was suddenly told that he was needed across the Channel, and shipped there: to a hell of mud and blood whose hideousness the human race is still only beginning to comprehend. Small wonder that the survivors, and the next generation, preferred to blot out all memory of the Continent. Medieval wars, in which armies remained in a foreign country for years, living off the terrain and perforce getting acquainted

* When I refer, here and elsewhere, to "the English" and "England," that is not because I have forgotten the existence of the three other races who make up the amalgam known as "Britain," but because I cannot find generalisations that hold true of all of them. The Scots, for instance, who for centuries enlisted French help in their battles against the English, have always had a more equivocal attitude towards the Continent, as have the Catholic Irish.

with local languages and customs, may have been a force for internationalism: but that was all over before Waterloo.

One result of this was that the English populace was, during the 1920s and 30s, as isolationist as the populace of America. The opening Spanish round of the struggle against Fascism simply passed over the heads of the English even those in the Labour movement. Once again, only the intelligentsia felt involved: partly because they could use their eyes and see what was happening, and partly because, since they felt that Europe was their home ground, the tramp of Fascist boots across it affronted them as the populace would have been affronted by the same tramp in their own streets and squares. As a result, nothing was done, except that a few young writers and artists went and got themselves killed, and the bulk of the English people only realised the size of their commitment when the B.E.F. came in from Dunkirk.

AND EVEN THEN it was only a commitment of *hostility*. The Germans had broken out again and we had to fight them—that was the attitude. And once the war was over, the shutters dropped down again. The whole period 1945–51 is full of paradoxes; this country was ruled by a government that was an unearthly blend of genuine idealism, genuine unselfishness, with a short-sighted materialistic meanness that still, in retrospect, takes one's breath away. Above all, it was narrow. There were so many things it simply didn't want to know about. And one of those things was Europe, the smashed Europe of 1945. The France where female collaborationists had their heads shaved and were baited by the mob; the Germany where people took refuge from the winter weather in holes in the ground, where the workers at the Mercedes-Benz factory had to start by rebuilding the factory itself before they could produce a single car. The English labour movement, seizing the chance to build up a Welfare State that would protect the workman from exploitation and hardship—an excellent objective—seems to have felt towards Europe very much as the Trade Unions felt about refugees in the days of Hitler. (Gas-chambers and human experiments were all very regrettable, no doubt, but we couldn't have these people coming over here and taking jobs away from Englishmen.)

In those early days after the war, England could have had the leadership of Europe. We chose not to take it, first because the Labour

mind was afraid of having to share the benefits of the welfare state with a lot of foreigners, and then because the Conservative mind was more interested in America and the Commonwealth. We were still refusing it ten years after the war, when we were invited to the preliminary talks that were to lead to the Treaty of Rome and the Common Market—and refused to go. After that, the Europeans forgot about us and went ahead on their own. We shall never again be offered leadership; we shall be lucky to get partnership.

IT IS TIME to speak of motives. When we engage in large-scale political action, it is always necessary to keep in sight what we are doing it *for*. I say this in the consciousness that human motives are never simple. Self-interest, of course, generally comes first; men, and nations, do what they think will benefit them; but even this rarely works out in a simple way. For instance, the British colonisation of India was undertaken by men whose main concern was to enrich themselves. Even patriotic motives came a long way behind. The result, however, was to enrich England as a whole, and also to leave subsequent generations with a problem of conscience, which they solved by insisting that the Indian population benefited from British rule. This insistence was not mere hypocrisy; many of the people who maintained it were perfectly sincere, and in some respects they may have been right. Still, they would hardly have thought up the argument in a vacuum. They produced it in an effort to justify, before world opinion and their own consciences, a situation which had been bequeathed to them by expansionist merchants in the preceding century. Thus, as the British Raj went on from generation to generation, the motives which sustained it became extremely complicated, particularly since one of the results of British imperialism was to call into being the Public School system, designed to breed empire-builders, and many of the products of these schools stayed at home and brought the psychology of the empire-builder to bear on internal problems. So that the governing class of England underwent a psychological change, which left traces on their thinking, their professional methods, even their appearance and way of talking, as a result of a few crucial years of colonial adventuring by men like Clive.

Motives? How does one begin to disentangle them?

Again, to take a more recent case: when I was in the Soviet Union a few years ago, I happened one day to buy a box of matches, and noticed that its cover bore a festive design of some kind, on which I recognised the name "Estonia" (or was it "Latvia?") and the dates "1940-1960." I asked my interpreter what it was, and she replied that the idea was to "celebrate" the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet annexation of Estonia. "Twenty years a Socialist Republic," she beamed. Now, as I knew and as she knew, the U.S.S.R. simply pocketed Estonia and Latvia, along with Lithuania, in 1940 by an open piece of territorial burglary. These decent and well-governed little countries disappeared into the Soviet grab-bag, while the rest of the world was too busy to hear their protesting cries, and that was the end of that. It was all as simple as drowning a basket of kittens. With one difference. The Soviet government found itself, like the British government in India, responsible for keeping alive the people they had corralled, and—since permanent discontent is expensive and inconvenient—brain-washing them into some sort of acquiescence in their lot. Hence the match-box. Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians old enough to remember before 1940 will probably not be impressed, but no doubt the theory is that as new generations arise, and if enough match-boxes are printed, the population will ultimately forget their earlier freedom. And—this is the point, since we are still considering motives—among the Soviet bureaucrats whose job it is to assure the Estonians that they are lucky, there are probably a good many who have the same combination of unconscious hypocrisy and conscious sincerity as the apologists of the British Raj. Once again, something that began as a mere brutal grab for power and possessions has become a situation that must be lived with. The original clear-cut motivation becomes a palimpsest.

BUT IN THE CASE OF a possible integration of Britain with Europe, we should be starting with a clean sheet; our motives would be apparent to us and to everyone else, brand-new, not inherited from a previous generation and therefore not scribbled over by time.

If Britain entered an amalgam of European states, would humanity in general be better off? Quite apart from what we stand to get out of it, what does anyone stand to get out of it? What values would be served? What evils would be resisted?

This question will sound old-fashioned. The nineteenth-century English were so much given to justifying their behaviour, even at its most selfish, with self-righteous appeals to Heaven, that in the twentieth century we have gone to the other extreme. Most English people, as I soon discovered by keeping my ears open, discuss the European question from the point of view of belly-to-earth selfishness and leave it at that. There is a fairly widespread sympathy for the senior Commonwealth countries, but the idea that this country might have a destiny with regard to humanity at large—might, in short, have *duties*—seems to have vanished pretty completely. Let me bring it back for a paragraph or two, if only as an intellectual exercise.

Our power may be sadly diminished, it may even have slipped down a few notches in the last few months, and certainly it is less than it was ten years ago when we were more widely respected—before Suez, that is, and before the England of MacWonder and "I'm-all-right-Jack." Still, it is pretty considerable. Which means that to add the resources of Britain to the resources of Europe would be to make that already colossal strength even stronger. And also, demonstrably, to benefit the European coalition in less tangible ways. If it is simply a well-disciplined club presided over by France and Germany, with its rules neatly defined and its functions laid down, it will be in danger of the Continental blight of over-schematic thinking; it will work too neatly and too predictably; it will be too squared-off, too diagrammatic. Adenauer and de Gaulle are both centralists, and both addicted to cut-and-dried ideologies. The entry of the English with their idiosyncratic blend of idealism and pragmatism, their long experience of thinking in global terms, their intuitive jumps from one point to another, would have done much to humanise the new Europe, to make it less predictable and schematic, more in keeping with the European tradition of creative diversity and less inclined to resemble the gigantic Woolworth's (diversity on the surface, sameness beneath it) of the U.S.S.R. or U.S.A.

Our entry, then (if my assessment is right), would benefit the new Europe. But then comes the question, is the new Europe a thing that ought to be benefited? Grave doubts have been expressed here, not only by fools but by men of intelligence and goodwill. Will it be any more than another super-state, driven by a super-nationalism that will be no more generous than

the old clutter of separate nationalisms? Will it not make the lot of the dispossessed nations even harder, by increasing the efficiency of the Haves and dividing them still further from the Have-nots? Will it not be dangerously provocative towards the Communist world?

It is unlikely that any one person can know the answer to all these questions. In my own opinion, the new Europe is something to be backed every inch of the way, *provided it is a fully federal Europe*, and I see little chance of its becoming so without British membership. Such a federation would develop a kind of Pan-European patriotism, but so far from seeing this as a danger I believe the formation of some such feeling is long overdue. As regards the under-developed nations, I do not see that a unified Europe would necessarily be more ungenerous to them than a divided one. It seems to me probable that a Europe confident in its strength, no longer wasting energy on anxiously jockeying for position one against the other, will certainly be better able, and very probably better disposed, to give some really effective aid to the backward nations.

If Europe unites effectively at the economic level, it will not be long before it unites at the political and military level, which is of course what we are talking about. And a Europe which could organise its scrappy and isolated pockets of military strength into an effective unity, and could somehow manage to put an end to the bickering as to who shall have what weapons and how much each member contributes to the cost—that Europe would be able to take care of itself without putting the whole defence burden on Washington, and would in consequence be very much less easily browbeaten by the Soviet Union. I see no danger of its being provocative or aggressive. Does *anyone* seriously imagine that any Western European nation would sail close to the wind of a nuclear war? Even General de Gaulle with his obsessive concern for *la gloire*? Even the Germans with their country unnaturally hacked in two and millions of their people behind barbed wire? Would either of them embark on the kind of irresponsible adventure represented by the North Korean invasion or the Cuban missile gamble?

I REALISE, of course, that there is a strong and vociferous school of thought in England which holds that anything the West does in interests of defence, any kind of vigilance

or firmness, is “provocation.” On the very morning when I am writing this, the *Daily Worker* has a shrieking headline about *Spy Flights Over China*. The sub-heading, of course, is something about *Provocation Inspired by America*. As if, at a time when China has just run amok, savaging India and threatening the rest of the free world, it weren’t only common sense to keep some sort of an eye on its military preparations. I suppose this kind of thing is written by fools who would be no more open to persuasion than flat-earthers. What does surprise me, however, is the persistence of these attitudes, though in a milder and vaguer form, among the intelligentsia at large. Being English, we prefer our Communism diluted with plentiful draughts of sentimentality and evasiveness; it is a useful rough-and-ready indication of the difference between us and the French that they have a large number of Communists and very few fellow-travellers, whereas we have a large number of fellow-travellers and very few Communists. But the double standard—the idea that the Soviet Union deserves mild disapproval for shocking crimes, and the United States violent disapproval for mild ones, is firmly entrenched in “advanced” circles, as firmly as the double standard about matrimony was among Victorian clubmen. I believe both to be equally quaint. Being anti-totalitarian, I am therefore anti-Communist. I detest any doctrine that elevates the state above the individual, and teaches people that they are brought into the world to serve the ends of any form of nationalism rather than to develop their own potentialities. This alone would make me reject international Communism, even if its record were not a repulsive story of cruelty and falsehood. This position seems to be shared by so few of the English intelligentsia that I must pause to make it quite clear.

The usual attitude taken by “progressives” during the last fifteen years has been a blend of neutralism with sentimentality about the Soviet Union. The continuing state of international high tension has been consistently blamed on the United States for its “provocative” attitude in standing firm against Soviet and Chinese threats. My opinion is exactly the opposite. Instead of quaking in my shoes every time the Americans refuse to retreat before Communist bluster, I quietly thank my stars that there is someone in the West who has the will and the power to show some firmness. Instead of urging that we cast off our alliance with America and throw ourselves on the mercy of the Russians,

I ask myself where we should have been, at any time since 1945, if we hadn't had some tough and determined allies. The widespread view that everything would be all right if only the trigger-happy Americans would stop annoying the Russians, is one that strikes me as frankly absurd. It squares with none of the facts as we have them before our eyes. That otherwise highly intelligent people can take this line is a good indication of the lengths to which irrationality can go, and helps one to understand things like seventeenth-century witch-burning.

THE MORE I THINK ABOUT this deep-rooted tendency to sympathise with Communism and make excuses for the U.S.S.R., the more I am inclined to trace it to the emotional necessity, for the *Lumpenintelligentsia*, of being *against* something. After about 1936, when the original ideals of Communism had been betrayed by Stalin in so spectacular a way that no one could avoid noticing it, the intelligentsia (in England, and to some extent in all Western countries including the U.S.A.) continued to sympathise with Communism and to shut their eyes to the realities of Soviet rule, because the chief enemy at the time was "Fascism," to which Communism was theoretically hostile. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which allied Russia and Germany at a time when the Germans were already at our throats, caused some English fellow-travellers to think again, but the rest went blandly on, and when Germany invaded Russia everything was all right again. The Left (very creditably) were embattled against Fascism and had been since it first became a power, and they could only hold one fact in their heads at a time.

After the defeat of the Axis powers, this floating animosity was transferred to the United States. The *New-Statesman*-reading progressive became anti-American partly from envy, since the Americans were rich and we were poor, and partly because it is annoying to have to depend on someone you have always patronised and been snobbish about. (Also there was one real grievance, the premature cutting-off of Lend-Lease, which was remembered when countless acts of American generosity and vision were forgotten.)

If you throw enough mud, some of it will stick. Spend enough money and enough energy on blackening the reputation of America, and nothing will ever scrub it quite clean. This was the policy, and to a great extent it has worked. Naturally every Communist hates America, for

the simple reason that had it not been for America the entire world would by now have come under Communist control. When the Red Army rolled across post-war Europe, engulfing one country after another, it was only halted at last by American economic aid which helped to restore self-respect in the bankrupt and exhausted Europeans, and by the American decision to under-write the defence of Europe and to stand by the principle that any attack on a Western European nation was an attack on them. This saved us. I am sorry to harp on the obvious, but I want to make it quite clear, for the benefit of any reader on the Blimp-Left who might glance at this article, that in my opinion England saved the world in 1940 and America saved it between 1945 and 1950. Saved it, that is, from becoming sucked under completely by an authoritarian and ruthless form of government.

I AM WELL AWARE that this attitude will seem fantastic to some of my fellow-writers. Mr. John Osborne, for instance, in replying to ENCOUNTER's leading question about the Common Market, opened with:

As I write in answer to this question about the Common Market, it seems possible that our disastrous alliance with the United States is likely to end where many of us always dreaded it might. Unconsulted, without warning, we have been told to expect our destruction in the cause of America's private crusade against Communism.

That, I think, fairly represents the attitude of our "progressives" to-day: the New Left, Committee-of-100, Chicken-Soup-and-Barley, Establishment-and-Private-Eye Kolkhoz who make up "advanced" radical opinion at the present time. I can't turn aside here to examine their reflexes one by one, but I could not write an article of this kind without making it clear that for me, the whole position is for the dicky birds. Mr. Osborne doesn't seem too clear in his own mind, to judge from the imprecision of his writing ("it seems possible" that such-and-such "is likely" doesn't bring it much closer, and to say that "without warning" we have been "told to expect" this and that, seems contradictory): but I am quite sure, from my personal knowledge of him, that he believes what he says with complete sincerity and with great passion. What I cannot understand is why. In the face of all that has happened in the last fifteen years, to go no further back, how—I ask helplessly—can anyone talk about "America's private crusade against Communism?" When a totalitarian doctrine, enforcing its policies and

gaining its ends by cruelty, lies, and doctrinaire heartlessness, threatens to engulf the whole world, how can we stand aside from the effort to hold it back?

A little later on, Mr. Osborne says,

Left alone, I'd make a small start on the socialist revolution by slinging out our defence expenditure (we'd sleep just as well as we have in the last few nights anyway), and spend the lot on education and the other investments that are needed to keep up in the so-called race.

Once again, I'm not concerned to argue the point, but to note the symptomatic attitude. What I find interesting here is the assumption that the only thing worth discussing is how *we* sleep at nights, how safe and comfortable *we* are, what happens to *us*. There was a time when Englishmen thought it their duty to resist oppression. They may have been dupes, they may have been short-sighted fools, but they thought this country had a duty, and the fact that they thought so, and that their belief influenced the whole pattern of English life, made it easier for them to sleep in their beds—if that is the criterion of a successful civilisation. Mr. Osborne, too, is willing to make sacrifices for his beliefs, even to die for them: "I would rather," he says, "die saying 'no' than accept the sentence of others." But what does this actually *mean*? If we lie down and wait for the Communist nations to wipe their boots on us, if we choose to cough our lungs out on a construction site in the Arctic Circle rather than defend ourselves as free men, isn't this "accepting the sentence of others"? The whole position is based, I suspect, on a deep, unconscious conviction that "it can't happen here." That hoary old English delusion! It reminds one of those people in the 'thirties who used to say that if the Germans invaded us, the best way to deal with them would be to treat them like tourists, invite them into our gardens to see the flowers, and serve cups of tea all round. Bertrand Russell, if I am not mistaken, was of this opinion. Thank God we didn't take his advice then! And pray God we shan't take it now!

I AM NOT, therefore, much impressed by the fear that a unified Europe would be too truculent in the Cold War. Firmness has been our best bet so far, and will continue to be our best bet; the two officials of the Committee of 100 who, during the Cuba crisis, went to the West of Ireland out of a considerate wish that two members of the élite should survive, to begin

civilisation over again, might as well stay where they are in future. But there is a more serious anxiety, one that is often expressed by people whose views I respect: and that is what we might call the anti-authoritarian hesitation. Will a unified Europe be undemocratic? Will it put too much power into the hands of faceless bureaucrats, provide too few checks and balances, and generally add up to an authoritarianism which will play its part in diminishing what little genuine human freedom is still left in the world?

My answer to this is bound to seem chauvinistic, and perhaps tinged with the flavour of sour grapes. I shall have to risk that, since I believe it to be the truth. Without Britain, a unified Europe would be all too perilously exposed to these dangers. With Britain, it might have avoided them fairly easily. What distinguishes Britain from most Continental countries is good government and a respect for the rights of the common citizen. The present moment is, or rather was, the great opportunity to build a federal Europe. Since General de Gaulle has managed to block Britain's entry, federation in the full political sense will be held back, perhaps for fifty years. Which is precisely what the General wants. A federal Europe could not have been dominated by one member. Our entry would have disrupted the next pattern that is rapidly taking shape. And this disruption would have been our gift to the Europeans, a gift that only we could have brought them.

WHAT IS FEDERALISM? What would it consist of? The best statement I know (by which I suppose I mean the one I agree with most) is in Denis de Rougemont's brilliant short book *Les Chances de l'Europe*. Explaining "*trois conceptions de l'union*," M. de Rougemont writes:

There are, in effect, two extreme and opposite conceptions. One, recently called "*Europe des patries*"—a fundamentally inaccurate expression—would confine itself to an alliance of nation states, each preserving its own sovereignty intact. That is the "minimalist" case. The other, which is roughly the conception of the Common Market, would unite the nations on the basis of total economic integration. That is the "maximalist" case. The first stresses, above everything else, diversities; the second, unity. I believe that the only form of union which matches Europe's particular genius, its history and the realities of its situation, as well as its present calling, is a union in diversity; the firm and flexible union whose prototype has been brought to perfection by the Swiss. That is the case for federalism.

The reference to Switzerland will save a lot

of discussion for anyone who knows that country. Switzerland came into existence in the first place because three small cantons pledged each other military support. "The basic structure of Switzerland," as Herbert Luethy noted recently in *ENCOUNTER* (No. 111), "dates back to a time when the modern conception of the state had not yet come into being." Precisely: and this is what makes the country such a useful working model of what a post-nationalistic Europe might be like. Instead of a centralist approach, issuing ukases from the big cities and sending out troops to ensure that the outlying villagers came into line, the Swiss philosophy of government is one that originates in the small mountain community, both isolated and fortified by the terrain, independent and self-reliant after centuries of scratching a living from the stony Alps, accustomed to communal living and group decisions because, in those conditions, herdsman and farmers survive only by taking collective action. The result is that the Swiss, of all Europeans, is the only one who sets a proper value on his locality. He is loyal to, and interested in, the village where he was born, and this loyalty and interest make him not a worse Swiss patriot, but a better. Unlike a Welsh or Scotch Nationalist, the Swiss feels that by giving his full support to the idea of a united Switzerland he is serving the interests of his own region, which is supported and sustained within the country's structure as a whole.

Of course one cannot make a straight comparison between Switzerland and any other European country, because Switzerland has chosen to live entirely within its own borders and has had very little contact with other nations on the level of foreign policy—the history of Swiss foreign policy in the last hundred years would just about go on to a postcard—and therefore it has been a simple matter for the Swiss to keep their central government from swelling to authoritarian size. It is only when a nation goes in for outside activities, such as wars, alliances, or colonial adventures, that it needs a strong central government. Still, Switzerland does demonstrate the one thing that, at the moment, needs to be demonstrated, namely that people with very different languages, traditions, cultures, and general assumptions can combine together without friction and make a going political concern. Such federalist experience, embodied as it is in a country lying exactly in the middle of Western Europe, right in the path of everyone's comings and goings, should prove invaluable.

So, too, should be the American experience of federalism. The American constitution was deliberately framed to prevent anyone at the centre from having too much power (so that they shouldn't have "another George III"), and, in spite of the almost constant tension between Washington and this or that Southern demagogue, the federal idea is very carefully maintained. So it is, paradoxically enough, in the Soviet Union. However little genuine autonomy is allowed to the sixteen republics, the federal structure is maintained on paper, and if the régime ever becomes liberal—a big "if," admittedly—a federalist government will be able to start functioning automatically.

Switzerland within Europe: America (in practice) and the U.S.S.R. (in theory) outside Europe—three examples of federal government are available for study and analysis. And the alternatives? General de Gaulle's "*Europe des Patries*" is, as M. de Rougemont has indicated, little better than a contradiction in terms. A Europe divided up into "*Patries*," each nursing its identity, would not be the new Europe of our visions, but the old Europe of our ordeals and disappointments. Besides, the problem is—not only in Europe but in the Americas, in Africa, in every part of the world—to integrate self-respecting units in a self-respecting whole. M. de Rougemont defines the spirit of Europe as "a creative tension." He sees it not as a monolith, which could be broken by a single blow if that blow were hard enough, but as the dynamic give-and-take of opposites. (He himself, as a Swiss who writes in French, as a Protestant taking his place in a culture so largely Catholic, is a good example in microcosm.) If he is right, and I think he is, in attributing the vitality of Europe to this diversity, this system of cross-tensions, then humanity's best chance for the future lies in encouraging something like this balance of forces in the minds of all peoples everywhere. To be proud of one's region, both geographical and also psychological, intellectual and cultural, and not to feel that this pride necessarily involves a surly and disaffected attitude towards the larger unit—that is the aim.

CAN IT BE ACHIEVED? When I think this over I am helped by a remark let fall by one of the writers who replied to *ENCOUNTER*'s enquiry a few months ago. "We are a middle power in Europe," Alastair Buchan wrote, "and therefore have a growing community of interest with other middle powers in Europe, especially

as, for some reason I cannot fully fathom, the effect of improving global communications is to make regional associations more important."

I, too, cannot fully fathom the reason, or reasons, why this should be so, but I think I can offer some pointers. In a society where news travels very slowly—in the African bush, for instance, or in the more isolated parts of Europe in the Middle Ages—the metropolitan centres are so impossibly remote that their spheres of influence are narrow, and disappear almost entirely after a few hundred miles. In such a society, the local centre, the local language, the local law-giver, is all. Then comes an intermediate stage, represented in Europe by the stage-coach. News, and the decisions of government, can be transmitted to every part of a moderate-sized country within, say, a week. At once the decline of the regional begins. The lure of the metropolitan becomes irresistibly strong, once it can be reached by anyone capable of a fairly determined effort. At such periods, capital cities reach their zenith. Johnson's remark that "the man who is tired of London is tired of life"—unintelligible if applied to the dingy sprawl of present-day London—excited no opposition in his own time; the importance of London to non-Londoners made a sudden jump in the mid-18th century, when sprung stage-coaches came into operation on reasonably good roads which had, for the most part, been cleared of highwaymen. It jumped several points higher when the railway age came in. If the electric telegraph made it possible for the newspaper to assemble news from every metropolitan centre in the world, the express train made it possible for copies of that newspaper to be delivered to, say, farmers in Aberdeenshire within twelve hours of being printed. Under these conditions, the news is of great importance to the outlying provinces. It arrives quickly enough to be fresh and worth discussing, and it gives the provincial reader a tantalising sense of being *almost* "on the spot," of knowing the news from Whitehall (or Washington, or Paris) *almost* as soon as the people who live there. During this period, there is a mass rush from the country to the town, and from the provincial town to the metropolis. Centrality is everything.

But then comes the third stage: the development of simultaneous mass communications. The most isolated countryman, miles from a town or a railway station, is suddenly in a position to know as much, and as quickly, as the metropolitan citizen. The loneliest shepherd

can learn the major world news within minutes of its breaking, by listening to his transistor radio; and when he goes back to his cottage, television will bring him the background, the faces and voices of the people who are taking the decisions (to say nothing of the stars of popular entertainment and the major sporting events, once attainable only by long and rare pilgrimages to the city). It is the triumph of centralisation, whereby the entire world becomes one enormous centre: and in that instant, centralisation disappears and the local, the particular, the regional, come into their own. The shepherd knows the latest decision of Khrushchev or Kennedy as soon as it is taken. But he learns the prices at an auction ten miles away only by waiting for the weekly paper, or by word of mouth in the tap-room. Where the mediæval peasant knew no news except the local, everything else coming through as mythical, the modern countryman is more up-to-date with the world news than with the gossip of his own parish. Effortlessly informed on global issues, he has to take a certain amount of trouble to keep up with local issues. Since we only prize things that call for an effort, this makes the local news more attractive; also, since he can play his part in handing it on, it becomes *his* news, and the decisions that are taken as a result of knowing it are partly his decisions. Hence, as global communications iron out differences, local associations become a more important part in maintaining the zest and flavour of life. Soon, it is the big-city dweller who begins to feel out of things. Daily thrown among millions of strangers, no longer able to maintain his attitude of superiority towards the country cousin, he feels that he has been robbed—and he has. So the rush to get into the city becomes a rush to get out. A snobbery of regionalism replaces the snobbery of metropolitanism. Part of this, of course, is make-believe. The Deserted Village is not really re-populated; it is turned into a dormitory suburb. No Western capital city could function for long if the commuters' train services were cut off. But at least this double focus can be useful in creating a state of mind favourable to the federal idea. Administratively and financially, the citizen looks to the metropolis. For most of what makes his life rich and enjoyable, he looks to the regional centre.

THIS IS, AT ANY RATE, PART of the reason why, in Mr. Buchan's words, a middle European power will tend to identify with other middle Euro-

pean powers. The simultaneous awareness of what takes place in every part of the globe has made Europe seem small—so small that a war between any two of its members would be as unthinkable as a war between Kent and Sussex. Because we know, from day to day and from hour to hour, what is happening in China, India, Africa, and America, we are at last fully conscious of a shared European situation. Thus Europe in general becomes the metropolitan unit to which we feel administrative loyalty, and each individual country becomes the region in which we feel an affectionate and lively interest.

"I want," wrote C. S. Lewis in the ENCOUNTER symposium, "what we certainly shan't get—a super-national state built out of units far smaller than the existing nations: units like Wessex and Picardy, not like 'Britain' (a horrid word) and France. Units so small, and real, would then safely develop the greatest local diversity of language, culture, and custom." The description is admirable. But why the pessimism? Why is it "certain" that we shan't get this very desirable state of affairs?

Naturally enough, we shan't get it unless we try for it. Simultaneous communications won't, by themselves, do the job of restoring the dignity of the parochial unit. We shall have to *want* that unity. And a good deal will depend on the shape of Europe after de Gaulle and Adenauer have retired. It seems incredible that these immortals will ever retire, but in fact they will, and the future of Europe, for a century at least, will depend on whether they are replaced by heirs who continue to carry out their present policy. Naturally we all hope not—"we" being, in this case, everyone who is unwilling to see the idea of a federal Europe submerged by a Franco-German hegemony.

The ideal of federalism is a sane and comely state of affairs in which the individual would belong to the largest possible economic and political unit and the smallest possible social and cultural unit. And the greatest enemy of this ideal is the centralised hegemony proposed by de Gaulle and in a less extreme way by Adenauer. I wish them long life. But I wish their ideas short life and ill success. If they get the

Europe they want, millions of average citizens will get a Europe they emphatically don't want. General de Gaulle in particular, who has uprooted representative government and replaced it by one-man control riding on the roller-coaster of plebiscite, has no reason to feel warmly towards a people like the English, democratic to their marrow, democratic in deep, ingrained, unconscious ways. To be closely bound in with England means to have a tap-root to one of the oldest and purest sources of democratic government. To the European peoples, this would be an advantage, and we must not be too diffident to remind them of this.

What we are offering the Continental Europeans is a chance to realise their own democratic potentialities. If they reject us, they reject the most hopeful part of their own future.

THIS, I KNOW, is putting the English claim high. A good many people in this country would regard it as an unjustified boast. But I imagine this scepticism would be less widespread among Continentals, who, whether or not they choose to admit it openly, have a very lively realisation that government, the art of getting along without violence and without too much injustice, is one of the spheres in which the English blend of pragmatism and idealism demonstrably *works*.^{*} Some Continental countries have a tradition of successful democracy, of course, notably most of the Northern European states and Switzerland (though Switzerland stands convicted of keeping its democratic balance by the too-easy method of making it almost impossibly difficult to become a Swiss citizen. Hence no problem with immigrants, bringing non-Swiss traditions; and very little poverty, since the rough work in Switzerland is done by imported workers who are dubbed "*hirondelles*" because they have to migrate every year.) Good government, of course, does exist on the Continent. Still, it is significant that in the ENCOUNTER symposium, the anti-authoritarian hesitation was expressed most forcibly by a contributor of Continental origin, Georges Mikes. "I do not trust Europeans," wrote Mr. Mikes, bluntly. "For me Britain is first of all the country where personal liberties are deep-rooted and sacrosanct and if I have learnt one lesson... it is that personal rights, secured and respected, count for more than anything else."

THAT IS WHAT, in my opinion, "we" can bring to "them." What can they give us? If we go into

* Another sphere is literature, though admittedly we are not producing much that is first-rate in literature just now, largely because we have submitted to a pop-drenched culture, heavily under the thumb of show-biz and advertising, in which the literary journalist is mistaken for a critic and the science-fiction writer for a visionary.

a European coalition, what shall we gain—not in terms of a shilling off this or a better military defence of that, but in terms of the life of the spirit, the inner qualities that make civilisation worthy of one's loyalty?

The answer, I think, is plain enough. We in England—little as I feel able to speak for the Welsh, the Scotch, or the Ulstermen, I'd better chance it and say "Britain"—we in Britain are suffering, at the present time, from two deep, unsatisfied needs. One is for more realism. The other is for more positiveness. The Continental atmosphere is not noticeably lacking in either of those qualities. Whatever their failings—and I'm not tempted to represent them as archangels just because I'm in favour of working together with them—Continental Europeans are tough, realistic, down-to-earth, and optimistic with a kind of final optimism that one senses behind their exterior cynical pessimism. If we joined with them, we should have to learn to think in their idiom, without necessarily abandoning our own. And the result, almost certainly, would be to cure these two deficiencies.

But am I right? Is present-day British life plagued by lack of realism and lack of positiveness? I imagine most of my readers will agree with my diagnosis. But there may be one here and there who doesn't: and to him, my closing paragraphs are addressed.

FIRST, the need for realism. All nations, and all individuals, have constantly to face this need. It is never easy to be clear-sighted about one's situation, as we all know from our personal lives. On the one hand there are the facts that stare a man in the face—his name and address, occupation, income, responsibilities, state of health, and likely prospects for the future. On the other, there are his inward hopes and fears. These are not mere fantasy, to be brushed aside, but an important part of his total reality, since he may have potentialities within him, of which he is conscious, but which no one has ever seen in action. Or he may have seeds of disaster in him, which again he is the only one to know about. A man's picture of himself is usually in a subtle and complex relationship to the external "facts." If the two were to square exactly, something would be wrong. But if, on the other hand, they do not come anywhere near each other, something is also wrong. Most kinds of mental disorder are the result of a wide divergence of inner from outer reality. And I would say—without, unhappily,

much fear of being contradicted—that this country is at present, in that sense, mentally diseased. We have too few people in responsible positions (and, if it comes to that, too few anywhere) who can disentangle dream from reality. Our insularity prevents us from seeing ourselves as others see us. And our national mixture of idealism, vague grand memories, vanity, the old habit of world supremacy, and sheer mental laziness, effectively prevents us from being candid with ourselves.

The results of this are everywhere. Take, for instance, the tragic farce of Conservative foreign policy, with its insistence that we remain an "independent nuclear power": the idea being that by so doing we should automatically stay in the Big League and needn't mix with those common fellows across the Channel. Gone, all gone! Puffed away by a few words at Nassau, not to say scattered by a snort from the contemptuous nostrils of General de Gaulle. Or take the complacent attitude towards education. This country inherited a good educational system, largely built up by the self-sacrificing efforts of devoted teachers in the 19th century. The result has been that nobody in this century has thought it worth making any effort or spending any money. Because Oxford and Cambridge (like Rolls-Royce) symbolised British hand-made quality and attracted buyers from all over the world, it was assumed that English education would always be respected. That no new universities were called for. That Oxford and Cambridge themselves would continue to cope with any situation, without any reorganisation, without reforms, re-thinking, or adequate funds. Result—such a mess that there has had to be a sudden riot of university building, ill-planned, hastily improvised, and still not nearly enough to meet the demand. Meanwhile the school system grinds slowly to a halt, so that we are increasingly finding, as the Americans found in the 'thirties and 'forties, that our universities are held back by the poor standard of the new entrants. You can't have an effective university system without good sixth forms. Or good sixth forms without adequately staffed, adequately financed schools in general. None of which we have, or are within sight of getting.

We have simply not realised the size of the tasks that are waiting for us. The party that got into power by boasting that major problems had been solved is now faced by an accumulation of serious troubles that will no doubt enrage the people and cause them to be swept out at the

polls very soon. And what shall we get then? Labour government—with all the negativism, the short-sightedness, the ignorance and narrowness, implied by that word. Is that unfair? Perhaps. There is no need to exaggerate the shortcomings of the Labour Party. But no one could deny that it is a party staggering under a huge load of dead wood: committed, on the one hand, to Unions whose idea of progress is another tanner in the wage packet and no questions asked, and on the other to an irresponsible far-Left fringe whose grip on reality wouldn't meet the needs of a dogs' home, let alone a great country. So what are we left with? The Liberals? Perhaps, but not for at least five years, by which time irreparable damage may have been done. When the Liberals talk confidently about moving straight away into the gap left by a deliquescent Labour opposition, they are indulging the same unrealism, the same retreat into fantasy, that blights the two principal parties.

THIS BRINGS US TO the second need: for positiveness. Wherever one looks, this is the day of the little people: carping, sneering, scoring debating points, building up their own egos while at the same time important tasks remain unattempted and important questions undiscussed. I won't instance the literary world, or the retort would quickly be made that, as a writer, I have personal interests at stake. But look at the scene in general. Has England ever offered so much opportunity to the weasel-like little character whose main instinct is to decry, to point out objections, to pelt with abuse, to stir up feelings of superiority and rancour? The new vogue for satire—what is it but the sudden, relieved discovery that mickey-taking is, after all, more fun than *doing anything*, besides being easier? Our new satirists, pampered by a delighted public that runs into millions, are busily fostering the idea that to abuse the man at the wheel is a kind of steering. Find somebody who's doing something—no matter who, no matter what—and throw a few insults at him. Then everybody feels good. This attitude is one of our dangerous illusions. It makes people feel that problems are being met. But problems are not being met. The smooth draught of satire slides down the insatiable public throat like some worthless quack medicine. The very ease and relish with which it is lapped up give the game away. Satire is only effective when it arouses rage, when the satirist comes under the lash of the authorities. In 1599 the Archbishop of Canterbury and the

Bishop of London, who between them had charge of such matters, issued an order that the satires of Hall, Marston, Nashe, and others were to be burnt: and also that no further satires by any author should be printed. From which we deduce that Hall, Marston, and Nashe had something that our contemporary sharp-clawed lion-cubs haven't. They are merely a symptom of the current national itch to be criticising instead of making.

THESE ARE our two evils. The hallucinating lack of realism, and the negativism which supports too many sharp little critics and not enough people *doing* things. And at our worst points, the two come together. What, for instance, lies behind the colossal expenditure of English people on gambling? Partly, of course, the simple fact that gambling is exciting and attractive. But, on the scale on which the English do it, something else is indicated. A wish to opt out of the Opportunity State. A yen to grab some of that money, without which all the things advertised on the telly aren't going to come our way—and to grab it the fast way, without effort, without training, without self-discipline. The desire to buck the system, when it is as widespread as to-day, indicates a lack of faith in the system. Other and more ugly indications are not wanting. If a lucky horse brings the money in fast, kicking an old lady's ribs and grabbing her handbag brings it in even faster.

Our evils won't disappear, of course, if we join in with Europe. But the first step towards straightening ourselves out could be taken if we would wipe our lenses and take a long look at the way things are going, and will continue to go, for a middle-sized power off the north-west coast of the European land-mass. And if, having taken that look, we decided to shake off our comfortable belief that the critic is a more respectable character than the creator, our illusion that any nation ever was or could be vitalised by mere perversity and the art of administering insults. The route ahead lies through these two psychological changes.

Our European neighbours could help us to make them. And in return we could contribute some English pragmatic idealism, some English respect for the individual and tolerance for diversity of opinion, to the new, self-confident Europe, generous and creative, that can still—if we are lucky—be a reality within this generation.

James Morris

A Ticket to Huddersfield

CROUCHED in a declivity among the Yorkshire moors, in the harsh allure of the Brontë country, there lies the town of Huddersfield, a four-square earthy English borough, and a place of drab and fusty reputation.

It is not guides or hotel reservations that you will need, if ever you make the pilgrimage to those stark smoke-filled valleys, but a responsive sense of history, for Huddersfield's fascination is more evocative than architectural: her passport to Baedeker is the fact that here, in these grim moorlands of northern England, the technical revolution began—a historical convulsion so fierce and inflammatory that it has changed half the world already, and is now tumultuously transforming the rest. All around you, as you stand at the top of Chapel Hill, you may see the monuments of that tremendous but brutal event, which erupted among the Yorkshire hill farms a couple of centuries ago: the long huddle of the textile mills, creeping away to the moor's edge; the marching file of tall brick chimneys, their vapours drifting into the dusk; the coveys of cramped terrace houses, jammed hugger-mugger against the hillsides; the dingy red brick everywhere, the patina of dirt, labour, and middle-age. It is not, at first sight, an exuberant scene. The wind blows chill and bluff off Wessenden. The buses lumber sadly by to Leeds and Slaithwaite, Oldham and Crosland Moor, housewives peering wanly in headscarves out of their misted windows. The evening sky is grey and melancholy. Somewhere a steam locomotive blows its lonely whistle, and there is a distant clanging of couplings in a goods yard.

Here nevertheless, in the Huddersfields of the north, our modern world was born. These horny, stocky, taciturn people were the first to live by chemical energies, by steam, cogs, iron and engine-grease, and the first in modern times

to demonstrate the dynamism of the human condition. This is where, by all the rules of heredity, the sputnik and the moon-rocket were conceived. Baedeker may not recognise it, but this is one of history's crucibles. Until the start of the technical revolution, in the second half of the 18th century, England was an agricultural country, only vestigially invigorated by the primitive industries of the day. She was impelled, for the most part, by muscular energies—the strong arms of her islanders, the immense shaggy legs of her noble Shire horses. She was already mining coal and smelting iron, digging canals and negotiating bills of exchange, and she had long moved, indeed, out of the subsistence stage, when men simply grow food to feed themselves. Agriculture itself had changed under the impact of new ideas: the boundless open fields of England had almost all been enclosed, and lively farmers were already experimenting with crop rotations, breeding methods and winter feed. There was a substantial merchant class already, fostered by trade and adventure, and a solid stratum of literate yeomen.

FOR MOST ORDINARY PEOPLE, though, in most everyday ways, England remained more or less the kind of country she had been a century before, her affairs still rigidly geared to the production and exchange of foodstuffs. Her landowners were rich and cultivated, her peasantry was ignorant and often hungry, and most of her people lived in the country. It was not a feudal society, but a paternal one, a land of squires, cultured country parsons, the tugging of forelocks and the dispensation of old folk remedies by tender-hearted gentlefolk, a country of such gentle pastoralism that a French nobleman visiting England in 1784 could describe her as "the finest country in Europe, for variety and verdure, for beauty and richness, for rural neatness and

elegance—a feast for the sight, a charm for the mind.” In this green and placid place the memories of one generation were very like the memories of the one before. No new source of power had been discovered for centuries, no new method of transportation, no vital new mercantile commodity. The pattern of patrician, pleb and tradesman was so precisely etched, and the forms of good behaviour were so generally accepted, that life had an almost tribal flavour to it, unquestioning and secure. Only the medication of religion, it was thought in those days, could much change the world: physically its form was moulded once and for all, and the general arrangement of affairs, the relationships between the classes, the disparities between rich and poor—these things were divinely ordained, and could only be improved, if at all, by prayer and chaste living. History shifted, to be sure—empires were won and lost, battles were fought in remote oceans, great men rose and toppled: but in the way common people lived, ate and moved about, England did not much change from one era to another. A medieval resident of Oxford, say, returned to the city in Queen Anne’s day, would find it all familiar enough. Since the departure of the Romans, indeed, nobody had thought of having central heating, and it is said that the chariots of the Legions rattled from Londinium to Eboracum a good deal faster than George III’s mail coaches from London to York.

SCIENCE changed all this, together with money. It was a process long in gestation, with its seeds far back in the New Learning of the Middle Ages, the inquiries of the Renaissance and the audacities of the Reformation; but with the first puffs of the Steam Age the English realised almost with a start that a way of life need not be sacrosanct, even without the divine intervention. Diffidently at first, robustly later, with a flood of new ideas, new inventions and new enterprises, they set in motion all those processes of change and development that were to transform their society from bucolic calm to brass-bound industry. Gradually it transpired that the new natural sciences, first probed by the savants of the 18th century, could be employed to make men richer and theoretically happier, to set a whole nation afire, to shift its entire outlook on human satisfaction, to give it such a shot in the arm or kick in the pants that it would never be remotely the same again.

Some say a decline of religion contributed to this new vision: that as men turned away dis-

illusioned from the promise of future salvation, they savagely turned their attention to saving themselves there and then. Others maintain that only the newly crystallised notion of nationalism, with its concomitants of unity and State purpose, could have inspired such an extraordinary jolt of attitudes. Certainly the widening horizons of trade, empire and settlement must have induced men to look beyond the cramped and static boundaries of their parochial origins. But whatever the metaphysical causes, however complex the historical stimuli, it was pre-eminently steam and hard cash that actually ignited the technical revolution: steam, because it came like a miracle after aeons of muscle-energy, powering the new factories and binding the whole nation with railroads: cash, because only shrewdly organised investment could provide the base for such sensational risks and leaps in the dark (for to this revolution, as to all others, there were powerful elements of roguery, eccentricity, and bravado).

Science and money did it, bolstered always by ruthlessness. It was no lily-road to well-being. Modern England was made in half a century, as you can see up there in Yorkshire. Wherever you look, there are the mills and tenements of the revolution—faded now and crumbling, or patched up with concrete and chromium, but still keenly suggestive of an old and furious momentum. The sheer scale of it all, the speed and energy with which the railroads were built, the rivers harnessed, the moorland valleys clothed in masonry—the sweep of it all is astonishing to contemplate, even now, and could only have been achieved by an impetus of violent force and brutality. It was not merely a matter of building factories. It involved the shattering of old shibboleths, the re-examination of old values, the migration of thousands of people from gentle countryside to raw new town. “At the corner of Wood Street” Wordsworth’s poor Susan used to pause: and from that dismal spot she would see, as in a vision, a glimpse of her lost rural England—

*a single small cottage, a nest like a dove’s,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.*

Many good, wise men contributed to the fizz of those years, but the first of the Yorkshire industrialists were seldom sensitive people. They were self-made, half-educated, vigorous, bullying, irrepressible men of ambition, always pushing, always grasping, edging ever more insistently into a society dominated till then by people of a gentler breeding. They made their

money partly by brave initiative, but partly by the heartless exploitation of simple folk: it was the *entrepreneurs* who invested the money, sustaining the pace and vigour of it all, but it was the working people who provided it, by accepting far lower wages than they were worth. Factory conditions were appalling. Housing was often repulsive. The treatment of child workers was one of the disgraces of European history, and the Dickensian squalor of the new industrial England, with all its cracked values and discarded traditions, survives to this day not only in slums and points of view, but even in bone structures: in many a North Country town you may still sometimes observe, in the figures of elderly passers-by, the rickety legs, bowed shoulders and pinched physiques that were the price of a nation's progress.

ALL THIS YOU MAY SENSE in Huddersfield, the Oderesfelte of the Saxons. Scarcely a trace remains there of the old pastoral England. Its gentry has long sold out and vanished, its fragments of half-timber are swamped in Victorian Gothic, its medieval traditions are overlaid, its country origins quite forgotten. You can see the open moorland from Chapel Hill, running away to Flockton or Todmorden like a dream of release beyond the chimney-stacks, but seldom was a town more intensely urban: for the catalyst of industry is aciduous indeed, and the old historical roots soon rot away in its intensity. Everywhere there are echoes of miseries. To this day the trade unions retain a stubborn militancy that is a relic of old ill-treatment. To this day the local motor-scooter club calls itself "The Luddites," after those poor, angry, bewildered folk who, baffled alike by science and by economics, smashed up the new-fangled machines of those valleys in an orgy of dazed resentment. To this day the stunted terrace houses (Violet Street and Lily Street, Hope Street and Berry Brow) crouch quaintly but damply back to back, instinct with rheumatism, mothers-in-law and strong sweet tea. To this day you may feel, in the faceless factory alleys of this place, the barren materialism of the pioneers—careless of everything beautiful, and soft, and old, and useless. Huddersfield is a town without grace—she is, to adopt a local tailor's classification, of a "short and portly" style. In her streets you may easily imagine the harshness of the original technical revolution, and you can hardly escape the relics of its gusto. It was a brave paradox that led

the visionary Blake, summoning his arrows of desire, to envisage the new Jerusalem among those satanic mills.

THE HUDDERSFIELDS were the pace-makers, but to-day there is scarcely a nation of the earth that does not wish to follow them down the highway to the mills. Despite a few wan rearguard actions, from romantics or tourist associations, the world almost universally accepts the proposition that the machine way is the right way, and that change is not merely possible and desirable, but actually inevitable. One by one the States are reaching the particular point in history that the British reached two centuries ago, when they burst into the effulgence of their steam and brass. For every people it is a cathartic moment of vision, of new awareness, never satisfactorily defined. It has been called "the revolution of rising expectations"—when a people realises at last that life may actually be expected to improve. It has been called "an illumination of choices"—when it dawns upon a society that history is not pre-ordained, that a tribe may choose another chiefly family, or even do without a chief at all. It has been likened to the "take-off" of an aircraft—when a national economy develops enough power to get it off the ground at last, and thereafter keep it moving with ever-increasing acceleration. It has been analysed as the moment when a nation learns to apply savings and science methodically to the earning of man's daily bread.

For myself, I prefer simply to collate these several stages or shelves of history with Huddersfield herself: for in the emergent nations of to-day, each groping or storming towards its own technical revolution, you may recognise all the symptoms of that old changing England, the cruelty and the excitement, the hope and the pathos, the abandonment of old ideals and the festive acceptance of new, the throttling of the past and the exaltation of the future. To grasp the nature of the relationship between poor and rich, ignorant and enlightened, among the simpler peoples to-day, try looking closely at one of those 18th-century prints of English mansions, drawn in the heyday of English pastoralism. There stands the great house, elaborate in formal gardens, with the gentlefolk stylish on their horses in the paddock, and the ladies scented in their bowers, and outside the high brick walls the carts of the peasantry trundling along rutted tracks—and if you work your imagination a little, envisage the dust that

swirled around those cart-wheels, and the lofty isolation of the squire, and the diseased illiteracy of the carter, and the patient poverty that lay beyond the picture-frame—if you think about the scene for a moment or two you will realise that the elegant pre-industrial England of the periwigs and the landscape gardens had a good deal in common with the Afghanistans, say, the Ethiopias or perhaps the Burmas of to-day. Such is the measure of a Huddersfield revolution, and its effect upon a nation's character.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, one fundamental difference. In the early days of English industrialisation, only the seers or the moguls saw what it would mean in terms of money, creature comfort, excitement. To-day the simplest rustic on the hay-wagon has at least an inkling of what lies over the garden wall. Ours is a world of obtrusive contrasts, from modern to antique, television screen to mud hovel, vulgar to fastidious—anomalies so pungent and so ubiquitous that contrast provides a *leit-motif* for almost every modern travel book.

In Cairo, to choose a particularly glaring example of the *genre*, it is only a sixpenny bus ride from a medieval back-street, alive with sorcerers, circumcisers and superstitions, to all the neon glitter of Shephard's, Groppi's, and Conrad Hilton. In the markets of west Africa you may still find, stubbornly ensconced among the nylons, all the chicken livers, dried monkey-heads, rats' claws and fœtuses of the witch-doctors. In Arabia convertible is yoked lopsidedly with camel. In southern Italy the man beside you in the *espresso* bar may well share his living-room with a cow. Even the superb restaurants of France are supplied by the labours of an archaic and often secretive peasantry. Fifty years ago travellers seldom wrote of contrast, as they moved in pomaded splendour from temple yard to pyramid: to-day it is this feeling of ironic confrontation, sometimes tragic, sometimes only comical, that most impresses the wandering observer, and sends him dizzy and bemused in search of synonyms. All the pressures of politics and propaganda, too, reinforce this sense of imbalance. It has been said that Hollywood, with its glittering caricatures of how the rich live, has been the most compulsive of revolutionary forces: and so universal has been the contagion that even in fatalist Asia the pursuit of happiness is now recognised as a valid political aim, not just a spiritual exercise.

AND HAPPINESS COMES, they nearly all say, out of a factory chimney. Almost everyone nowadays, from the loftiest sheikh to the most bestial backwoods primitive, has felt some backwash of modernity, if it is only a blown bulb discarded by some passing alpinists, or a tin of baked beans from a sergeants' mess, and there is an irrepressible urge among the simpler nations of the earth to possess their own steel mills, computers, and pithead baths. Technical revolution is seen as the universal panacea, and few peoples nowadays are prepared to honour the traditional disciplines of society—wisdom and generosity for the rich man, respectful labour for the poor. Sometimes the urge to change is only an expression of foolish national pride, to be satisfied by vainglorious gestures. Sometimes it is an ill-conceived desire, engendered by generations of foreign rule or patronage, to stand all alone in the world, self-sufficient and self-employed. Sometimes it is politics, smoky circuses for insufficient bread. Sometimes it is scarcely more than a yearning for fun—life in a primitive pastoral village can be excruciatingly monotonous, if once your appetite has been whetted for jazzier pleasures. Sometimes it is the result of urgent and awful pressures: poverty, wasting natural assets, an explosive increase in population. Sometimes it is no more or less than an irresistible historical process, the fulfilment of one era, the opening of another—the intuitive public certainty that a community has reached the peak or nadir of its old system, and must now start afresh.

Most of the experts agree, too, that the purely agricultural societies are rightly doomed, and that the impetus of economic development must be towards new industries, new sources of power, a spread of urban living. Here and there farming peoples like the Danes may survive, if they are advanced and sophisticated enough: but only industry, say the pundits, can absorb the world's surplus man-power, and keep this planet in the requisite condition of economic expansion. For myself, though I must perforce accept their statistics, I still have doubts. I do not trust the judgment of economists, and I wonder whether something fundamental is not drained from the human spirit as the green places vanish, one by one, and contact with nature is confined to oxygen tubes and television screens. Anyone with a sneaking sympathy for the thesis that experts are wrong, people are bloody and all progress for the worse—anyone of simmering traditionalist tendencies must view

with some disquiet the philosophies of universal modernity. So much that is brash, heartless, and ugly stems from too sharp and unthinking a change of tradition: the uneasy hybrid cultures of Africa are one example, and another is the appalling rate of tooth decay among English schoolchildren, whose parents, suddenly hoisted into industrial affluence, squander their high wages heedlessly on chocolates and gee-gaws.

THE UNIVERSAL TRUST in change, though, is inescapable, and is often exceedingly moving. I was once wandering alone in the highlands above La Paz, the Alpine capital of Bolivia, when I met a raggedy old cow-herd in a high grazing-ground on the edge of the snow (where he was guarding four young bulls destined for the city bull-rings). He was the simplest kind of Andean Indian, wearing a queer sort of skull-cap with ear-flaps, and looking as knobbly and wind-roughened as an old juniper: and when I approached him I saw that his right eye was bleary, swollen, and wet with tears. Some weeks before, he told me, a particle of grain had lodged beneath the eyelid, and now all was puffed and septic—and edging close to me, looking up at me with his good eye and summoning a wan quivering smile, that old man invited me with absolute heart-rending confidence to cure him, so sure was he that the mere breath of modern man, like the antique touch of royalty, could dispel such rural miseries.

No wonder the yearning for progress is so irresistible. It may only show in an anxious eye, a dog-eared picture book, a crinkled peer through your field-glasses—in Nepal they still believe that binoculars enable the westerner to see beneath the crust of the earth, where the rubies and emeralds lie. It may be expressed more tragically in the inexorable movement of poor people everywhere from countryside to city, from thatched cottage to suburban maisonette, from barn to assembly line: the awful slums of South America, huddled among the sybaritic delights, are only an echo of Poor Susan's reverie, and so are the degradations of Calcutta railroad station, where the starving migrants lie about in their hundreds wrapped in rags and newspaper. The romantic view of pastoral living is almost confined to artistic amateurs, as any honest farm labourer will robustly assure you, if you are fool enough to compliment him upon the peace and quiet. A yearning for solitude and open spaces is not one of the commoner impulses of humanity,

and the ideal of serene poverty, though still cherished by sophisticates and ascetics, is generally as discredited as Rousseau's vision of the noble savage. The desire for week-end cottages comes late in a society's lurching progress towards utter urbanity: before you feel the need to retreat into the country, you usually feel the need to escape into the slums.

THE SIMPLER HALF of our contemporary world, then, with its eyes on the rockets and refrigerators of the sophisticated half, is hoping always to modernise itself, and indeed, by and large, the difference between a rich nation and a poor one is the difference between a mechanical and a muscular society. To-day it can perhaps be said that a third of the world has passed the Huddersfield cross-roads into industrial prosperity, and the other two-thirds is, by one route or another, straining to get there. In the past the process has never been easy, whatever the means. It has often been painful and sometimes violent, more like child-birth than menopause.

Western Europe industrialised itself more or less in the British way, a little later for political, social, or educational reasons, but generally employing the same techniques of investment and inducement. The North Americans built their Pittsburghs and Detroits by the often uncompromising exploitation of poor immigrant labour—men who were prepared to work almost any hours, for almost any wage, in almost any conditions, for the chance of eventual dignity. The Japanese, alone in Asia, modernised their ancient kingdom by the paradoxical combination of a fierce traditional discipline, a genius for adaptation, and a vast diligent labour force. The Russian Communists, continuing a technical revolution that their Czarist forebears had already begun, transformed their society from feudalism to industrial supremacy by methods of murderous coercion. It was never easy. It required, in every instance, a strong central government and a stable political structure; at least the nucleus of an educated class, with some knowledge of management as well as technique; what the economists call an "infra-structure" of roads, railways, telegraphs and ports; a ruthless determination not to be hampered by the traditions of the past, whether they were represented by faithful nannies or miraculous icons; a hard core of reasonably efficient and relatively incorrupt institutions, from post offices to patents boards; and not least the readiness to risk and save money, public or private.

Sometimes it was achieved, as in America, by the full armoury of private enterprise, concerned less with national prestige than with personal profit. Sometimes, as in Russia, it was above all the State that fathered the process, seeing in it a promise not merely of prosperity, but also of power. To men of all political creeds, in the century after Huddersfield, mechanisation became a symbol of fruition. The Stalinist film heroes had tractors for heroes; the Model-T Ford was the very emblem of The American Way; and as for the British themselves, so well did the machine age suit them that by 1913, when their population was 40 million, their overseas investments were worth more than all the rest of the world's put together, and were almost as valuable, in real terms, as those possessed by the United States, 180 million strong, half-a-century later. In peace, it was the massive security of Victoria's Britain that spoke loudest for Huddersfield: in war, it was perhaps the astonishing victory achieved by the Japanese over the Russians in the war of 1904-5, proof positive that out of technique comes triumph.

FOR THE EAGER YOUNG NATIONS of to-day, the task of modernisation is in some ways easier than it was for the pioneers. It has been amply demonstrated, for one thing, that anyone can do it: and for another, a kind of initial deposit of modernity was often laid by those vast empires which, until a couple of decades ago, divided most of the pastoral world among themselves. Technically the transition from muscle to machine is no longer really difficult, given some degree of literacy, enough money, a modicum of help from abroad and plenty of time. Machines are easy enough to come by, managers can be hired, boys can be sent for training in Moscow or in Massachusetts, a good engineer will build you a road, a dam or a railroad line in any terrain on earth. Constructing a modern mechanised society is no longer a job for visionaries, whether a State chooses to do it by compulsion (like China) or persuasion (like India).

You have only to look at the automatic telephone exchange in Addis Ababa, a miracle of delicate connections that has been assembled by Ethiopian technicians, to know that the state of a society, let alone the colour of a skin, no longer impedes the progress of technical knowledge. India is, I suppose, one of the most ramshackle and unwieldy of States, yet her steel mills are now admirably efficient. Ghana is one of the most unprepossessing of republics,

incurably snarled up in personal ambition and immaturities, but the usual academic standard of university students in Accra is higher than the British average. The Arab of the desert is a figure of bird-like inconsequence, evasion and charm, only one generation removed from the camel-raids and the blood-feuds, yet no freckled American youth is better able, with an inch of wire and a gob of chewing-gum, to revive an exhausted automobile. It takes time, and in the end the debilitations of climate may win after all: but no initial magic is needed nowadays, to turn a yokel into a machine-man.

THE LEGACY of imperialism contributes to this quickening of abilities, if only because resentment often sharpens the senses. Most of the aspirant States of to-day are ex-colonies—or, like the South American republics, countries that have recently detached themselves from the leading-strings of more experienced Powers. Before and between the two wars a groundwork of industrialisation was laid in many countries by the agents of foreign domination, political or economic. In the heyday of British supremacy fifty separate organisations were all at work in London promoting overseas investment, and almost the whole financial structure of South America was established, in the century after that continent's emancipation, by foreign enterprise: in Argentina, for example, the British alone were responsible for the first steamship, the first wire fence, the first sheep-dip, the first gas, the first electric light, the first meat-packing plant, the first insurance company, the first banks, tramways, telephones, and railroads—not to mention the first games of polo, soccer, tennis, golf, and rugby football.

For several decades, impelled by motives sometimes honourable, sometimes shift, sometimes deluded, sometimes far-sighted, the imperial Powers of western Europe poured money into their dependent territories of Africa and Asia, and into the temperate zones of South America. It was not often, indeed, that they established manufacturing industries in those parts, to compete with their own factories at home. They did, however, organise the extraction and preparation of raw materials. They did throw the roads and railways across those distant landscapes. They fostered, in some territories, the incipient educated middle classes that must provide the skills of management to-day. They founded, here and there, civil services of an excellence that still survives. They provided, for

most of the time, that basis of public order which, whatever its moral or political implications, is the first essential of development. We would be hypocritical to be effusive about their altruism, but blind to ignore their achievements. Largely because of imperialism, there are few countries in the world to-day that have not tasted some physical benefits of the technical civilisation, whether it be dinner on the Bombay Mail or a tetanus shot in the Congo.

METAPHYSICALLY IT IS A different story. In literacy, in culture, in skills, in experience, in understanding of money and means, in popular attitudes, in public integrity—in maturity most of to-day's emergent countries are still centuries behind 18th-century England, that "feast for the sight and charm for the mind," which at the moment of Huddersfield had not only produced great poets and statesmen by the dozen, but Newton too, Locke, Hume, and a whole gallery of eminent mathematicians, philosophers, and political economists. England was already a complete civilised State, an experienced maritime and commercial Power: her successors to-day are often trying to leap direct from backward dependency to complete scientific sovereignty—from the Middle Ages, sometimes, direct to the nuclear age. Occasionally, indeed, you may find a colonial territory so soaked in European custom, so integrated with the suzerain Power, that all the attitudes of modernity are there already, only waiting to be sparked: Martinique, for example, away in the splendour of the Caribbean, alive with bobbing straw hats, blazing exotic flowers, rum and perpetual sunshine—Martinique is so deeply infused with everything French, from *Marie-Claire* patterns to archaeological societies, that though there is scarcely a citizen of the island who could confidently be classed as white, nevertheless the island's reactions, postures, and aspirations are as mature and moderate as anything in Europe.

Elsewhere, though, the aspirant nations are seldom so restrained, seldom so sophisticated, and there is often an undeniable streak of pique or pride to their hankering after modernism. The poor world of to-day ranges from great and ancient cultures to pocket States of Balkan fragmentation, only a flag's length from the trees: but when we think about the contemporary technical revolution, erupting simultaneously if erratically all over the globe, we must remember that it is happening sometimes to societies roughly equivalent, in frame of mind

and degree of worldly experience, to Europe five or six centuries ago. In South America there are countless peasants who have flown in aeroplanes before they have set eyes on a tarred road: so shattering are the transitions of our time, and so easy has it become to skip a historical stage or two, in the headlong pursuit of progress.

WITHOUT MUCH discrimination, contemporary history judges that all these States, from the noble to the footling, are ripe for the great change—ready to move from purely agricultural, subsistence economies into the kind of world that lives by buying and selling, by making things and putting things together. Indeed, the truth is that history has no choice. The birth-rate now exceeds the death-rate so dramatically that every minute the world's population increases by sixty souls, and by the end of this century may well have doubled—Friday, 13th November, 2026 was recently forecast by a University of Illinois research team as Doomsday, the moment when, if things continue as they are, the population of the world will squeeze itself into nemesis. Already the earth is running short of arable land, and it becomes clearer every day that mankind can only survive, like Frankenstein, by the abilities of the machine. But more than all this, history can only recognise the inflexible will of the poor peoples to live like the richer half—the Huddersfield way. Nothing on the planet to-day is more vital and inflammatory than this eagerness of the aspirant peoples, their burning desire for change and opportunity.

The most obvious thing they need is money. Some economists, indeed, tend to melt the whole process down to hard cash. What turns a traditional society into a modern one, they say, is pre-eminently a high enough rate of investment—production instead of mere consumption. The British financed their original technical revolution out of the profits of empire and a slow, orderly mercantile development. The Americans financed theirs largely by raising money abroad—by the end of the 19th century, European investors had sunk \$3,700,000,000 in the United States. The Russians did it, at least after the revolution, by means of Communist economics so savage or topsy-turvy that they could switch consumption into production by the merest flick of a commissar's pen, or summon a few million roubles out of the steppes by the sheer exertion of dogma.

To-day's aspirant countries usually have no such ready resources. Some of them, to be sure,

like Ghana, Malaya, or Peru, have immense natural advantages, and are sustained by the market for raw materials. Others, though, like Jordan or Pakistan, seem to have almost no way of earning their keep at all, no apparent means of ever improving their own affairs: they say that just as the bumble-bee is aerodynamically incapable of flying, so the Republic of Lebanon is an economic impossibility. Others again, like Egypt or India, though vast and productive by most standards, are faced with such appalling conundrums of birth-rate, poverty, and hunger that all their exertions, all their sacrifices seem to leave them more or less where they were before—working a hopeless treadmill to maintain their status quo. In some countries rich men are unwilling to sink their money into industry, preferring the old security of land ownership, or lending it to smaller agriculturists at dizzy rates of profit—an old acquaintance of mine in Chile, when I bumped into him by chance in a Santiago hotel, told me blandly upon inquiry that he earned his living nowadays by lending out small sums of money at 90 per cent interest. In other parts of the world, though the potential of the industrial way is clearly understood, somehow local investors prefer to put their faith in Swiss, American, or West German concerns, rather than risk their money, as good patriots should, in Wulustani Textile, Mineral, and General Development Corporation Inc.

FEW COUNTRIES, THEREFORE, can now achieve a technical revolution without money from abroad—China is perhaps the only contemporary exception. To buy a ticket to Huddersfield, you need a rich uncle somewhere. This implies a phenomenal strain upon the capital resources of the rich countries, for the scale of the demand is enormous—so sudden has been the new understanding that has followed two world wars and the collapse of the imperial system. It is hard to know, indeed, when a country is over the industrial hump, or when you can define a State as rich or poor, simple or sophisticated. Is Russia, with her immense backward regions, a *developed* country? Or South Africa, with her towering cities and her rock-bottom African reserves? Or Ireland, in some ways a State of extreme urbanity, in others stagnantly backward? Even the States of western Europe, the most subtly civilised of all, still welcome infusions of foreign cash. If we take Huddersfield as our yardstick, though, we can reckon that perhaps two-thirds of the world is poor and

aspirant: two-thirds of the world, mostly in the tropical zones, urgently demands modernisation—urgently demands, that is to say in this particular context, hard cash. And if two-thirds of the world justifiably needs money, only the other third can supply it.

BEFORE the second World War money for developing countries generally came from imperial stocks, from private investment, or from Government loans. In those untidy and inconclusive years, many a rash investor singed his well-manicured fingers. The imperialists, notably British or French, discovered that empires were not, by and large, paying propositions: it is an ironic fact that the British and French economies ceased to expand with any gusto at the very period when, towards the end of the 19th century, they became full-blown whole-hog imperialists in the modern sense—and conversely, Englishmen were never so prosperous as they have been since the sun set on their white man's burden. Private investors often flourished, indeed, as you may see from many a Guatemalan banana grove, Argentinian packing-plant, shoe factory in India or Rhodesian copper-mine: but they suffered, too, from the chronic instability of many a quarrelsome and avaricious backwoods State, and from the dismal cycle of slump and boom that plagued the era. It was an unhappy period for international finance. Often loans were brutally repudiated. More often still they went by default—in 1933 37 per cent of all loans to foreign governments outstanding on the New York market were in default. The Finns were the only people in Europe who repaid their 1914 war debts to the United States on time and in full. The appalling inconsistencies of South American finance, displayed in innumerable welshings, back-slidings, and procrastinations, have coloured North American attitudes to this very day, and make many a Wall Street magnate blench and crack his finger-joints when confronted with the very suggestion of Brazil.

Since the last war the situation has radically changed. In 1939 half the earth was ruled by the European empires, who usually seemed to think, for reasons later proved mistaken, that they would gain by preserving their dominions as national enclaves, providing raw materials, markets, and opportunities alike for their own business people. Little foreign investment or enterprise was encouraged in those vast subject territories. The ruling powers were scarcely eager

to establish manufacturing industries in their colonies—to this day you may still find some opposition in Huddersfield to the modernisation of primitive States, in the past such contented customers for beads, baubles, and piece goods: in any case, canny financiers generally preferred to invest their funds in empty temperate countries, rather than teeming tropical ones.

To-day, though, the empires are released and fragmentated, and each emancipated State is clamouring for its own technical revolution—together with many an older nation, shaken out of its habitual apathy by the rip-roaring stimulation of the times. There is an insatiable demand for money to hasten the levelling of the world, the bridging of the gap between the almost obscenely affluent West and the almost sickeningly destitute remainder. Almost the whole of Africa, South America, and Asia fizzles with the revolution of rising expectations, which leaves, in effect, Europe and North America to satisfy it: and if you would measure the gap between the two, bear in mind that the volume of external trade in Canada is just 70 times as great as the volume of trade in that Shangri-la of old Africa, Ethiopia.

THIS IS A DIFFERENT ORDER of things from the sporadically developing world of the 'thirties: but by one means and another the demand for money has usually been met. There has been a shortage of private capital since the last war, as the advanced Powers themselves have reorganised their industries out of chaos, but there has been, by any previous standards, a regular torrent of public funds pouring into the simpler countries. Some have benefited from the capital accumulated by the neutrals during the war. Some have been drawing ever since upon the sterling debts piled up by Britain's vanished fleets and armies. Most of the cash has inevitably come, however, from the United States of America, sometimes for reasons of noble simplicity—the happiness of one State contributes to the welfare of all others—sometimes as a squalid and inept side-play to that arid Great Game of our times, the Cold War.

It is only since the last war that the economic buttressing of poor countries has been properly recognised as an instrument of State policy—dollar imperialism is as old as Uncle Sam, but hitherto it has usually been based, frankly enough, upon the impulses of private self-advantage. In recent years it has dawned upon the political theorists that since poverty and

frustration are the twin wombs of Communism, the best way to abort that awkward creed is to abolish poverty and frustration. This has led to some prodigal disbursements of public funds—money thrown helter-skelter down many an ill-flushed drain in the tired old belief that generosity will at least inspire gratitude, if not actually good government. It has also led to a contest of paternalism with the Soviet Union, a nation which has lately reached the same totally erroneous conclusions about the political consequences of generosity. Both sides are now learning that thanks are not votes, and that a really determined little State can accept good Communist cash with one hand and healthy capitalist dogma on the other. Among the recipients of aid from the United States, that prime old liberty-man, are such uncompromising autocracies as Spain, Ghana, Persia, and Siam. Notable among the beneficiaries of Soviet aid is Egypt, a country whose fly-blown desert prisons shelter several hundred dedicated disciples of Marx. Several countries have discovered for themselves that the devil you don't know is far less attractive when you meet him horn to horn. In India, for instance, it came as a shock to many anti-imperialists to discover that the Russians who arrived to build them a steel mill displayed all the familiar aloofness of old-school sahibs; they, too, stockaded themselves in a little enclave of nostalgia, they too had snooty wives who spoke no foreign languages, they too unaccountably preferred vodka and borscht to vegetable curry and lemonade. The agents of progress are very alike, whatever their ideologies, and a Chinese engineer in Cuba can be just as bossy and insensitive as a Dutch commissioner in New Guinea.

SOMETIMES, TOO, this crass rivalry has to it elements of knock-about farce. The most theatrically symbolic arena of the struggle is Afghanistan, across whose prostrate but always twitching presence the Russians have, for more than a century, faced their opponents across the Asian divide. In the old days it was the British in India whose muzzle-loaders peered back across the Hindu Kush, to-day it is the Americans and their allies, but the flavour of the contest remains startlingly, almost ludicrously the same. Four times the British invaded Afghanistan, during the lifetime of the Raj, and it never did them the slightest good: billions of dollars and roubles have the Americans and Russians poured into the kingdom, without any detectable political effect. The Afghans are the slip-

periest and wiriest of clients, and they long ago learnt to play off one Titan against the other, with results always profitable to themselves. The Russians have paved their capital city for them. The Americans have organised their airline. The Russians have built them a bakery. The Americans have given them a university. The Russians have thrown highways across their fierce interior. The Americans have built them an enormous airfield at Kandahar. The Russians are ensconced in one Ministry, the Americans in another. Wherever you go you will meet the gleaming station-wagons that represent one pulsing ideology, or the swart high-axed jeeps that are emissaries of the other.

Any morning, in the Ariana Hotel in Kabul, you may see the Russian technicians preparing for the day's philanthropy: five to a bedroom, portly, thick-set men, who look as though they have never laughed in their lives except at obscure technical badinage, and who are to be seen through half-open doors wearing baggy brown pyjamas, gargling out of chipped mugs or scrubbing their chests with nail-brushes. Down the road, though, at the very same moment of the morning, the Americans are similarly preparing: their fin-tailed convertibles await them in the carport, their hygienic mouth-wash stands ready-mixed, their vacuum-packed breakfast cereal crackles in the box, and Junior is already playing with his plastic moon terminal on the sprinkled lawn. Briskly they both eat their breakfasts, Riley and Ivanov both. Purposefully they step into their cars, with a Detroit purr or a Kiev rumble. Confidently they hasten away to their offices or building sites, sure in the knowledge that they are serving cause and country. They are like rival sugar-daddies, courting the same wide-eyed blonde: and just as the blonde is often not half so dumb as she looks, so it sometimes crosses the Afghan mind, I suspect, that there's one born every minute.

This competitive benevolence is to-day's most powerful instrument for hastening the universal technical revolution, for transplanting in the poor world the mechanical civilisation that Russians and Americans willy-nilly share. By far the greatest external sources of development funds are the American official agencies, and by far the greatest prod to western generosity is the possibility that the Russians may offer more. Sometimes it does no harm. Politically the Afghans are as independent as ever. Materially they can only benefit. The roads are paved. The bakery does bake. The university is probably

excellent, and the airport at Kandahar certainly looks impressive (even if, being situated as it happens in possibly the most inconvenient position in Asia, not many aircraft seem to use it). Thoughtless and unselective aid, though, can lead peoples of less resilient character into bad habits. It encourages, to put it at its most prosaic, loose practices of management and finance—if you can get one hundred million dollars out of a sugar-daddy, you can probably squeeze two. It leads nations to suppose that they can feed permanently upon the rivalry between the Powers. It sometimes keeps alive régimes that have no right to survive, which would in the natural course of political evolution soon topple into the limbo of discredited despotisms. Worst of all, it sustains the Cold War itself, makes its protagonists feel that they must always outbid each other, vulgarises and degrades the very notion of generosity.

FOR IT SHOULD be axiomatic among the Powers that one of the duties of wealth is charity—a word which is suspect still, among small States as among impoverished relatives, but which best sums up the combined abstractions of love, hope, generosity, and good sense. As the Sanskrit proverb has it, “all we can hold in our two dead hands is what we have given away.”

The inequalities of the world are not merely dangerous or grotesque. They are terribly wrong, and as the citizen of the west reaches for his remote-control television selector he would do well to remember that (to pluck a statistic almost at random) in south-east Asia the infant mortality rate is four times as high as it is in western Europe, and life expectancy is less than half as long. The living standards of the western world have reached a standard, to my mind, which is more than adequate, and which is perhaps, so long as there are still palsied beggars in the streets of Lima, or pot-bellied starving children in Indian railroad stations, actually immoral.

There are three proper justifications for the perpetual increase of wealth in the rich countries. The first is self-defence: the legitimate desire of a civilisation to protect its own kind of society against the predacity of rivals. The second is continuity: the right of a people to provide for its children all the comforts and advantages it has enjoyed itself. But the third and most important is charity: the duty of a rich man to help his neighbour, of the strong

to support the weak, of the sanguine to encourage the despondent. Many Englishmen have doubts about the union of their old kingdom with the continent of Europe, with all its possible corrosion of ancient traditions and staunch values: but morally they surely have little choice, for without the economic flippancy such an association can bring them, they cannot play their part in helping the aspirant countries towards fulfilment—the principal duty of our age for Powers with a conscience. Many Americans regret their country's lavish programmes of overseas aid, despairing of its frequent naïveté and incompetence, and scoffing at a policy that can pour good dollars into States of such desperate uncertainty as Laos or Bolivia: but posterity will say, I have no doubt, that for all its errors and false motives, the post-war American structure of foreign help, from the Marshall Plan to the Alliance for Progress, has been one of the nobler aberrations of history.

A FLOOD OF GOODWILL has, in fact, eddied during the past two decades from the rich world to the poor, from men of sophistication to men of simplicity. The various aid programmes of the United Nations have not always been conspicuous for practical efficiency, but have always oozed benevolence. The youth movements in Britain and America which have sent young people out to work in the poor countries have attracted candidates of the highest calibre. All over the world individual reformers or visionaries are trying, in small pockets of initiative, to usher one small segment of humanity out of the past into the present. There is the fire-eating Danilo Dolci in Sicily, for example, with his home-made dams and his self-help classes. There is the Belgian mystic Father Pire, with his village reclamation schemes in East Pakistan. The crippled South African liberal Christopher Gell, whose blazing reformist energies sprang like fire from his iron lung in Port Elizabeth, was playing just such a part in the South African industrial revolution as Wilberforce and his friends did in the British—for often and again, if you examine one of the fearful political dilemmas of our day, you will find it to be, in deepest essence, only Huddersfield and the Luddites over again.

Most of the richest countries now have their overseas development institutes: the Russians even have a university specifically for the training of Africans and Asians. I can scarcely bear to remember the mountains of platitudes which

have, at one recent time or another, been mouthed on the need for universal progress. I can scarcely enumerate the myriad benevolent societies which are always at work, hag-ridden by guilt or avid for salvation, raising the standard of Asian, African, or South American living. ("I swear this is my last luncheon," says an ample lady in a Lichty cartoon, helping herself to more trifle at the Benefit Luncheon for the Under-Fed Kuka-Burras. "These benefits to aid the under-nourished and under-privileged nations are *ruining* my figure.") Desperate indeed have been the euphemisms coined to clothe the naked fact of backwardness: under-privileged, under-developed, less-developed, emergent, aspirant, nascent, blossoming, burgeoning. Prolonged to a degree are the organisations of economic aid: the Colombo Plan, the International Finance Corporation, the Export-Import Bank, Point Four, the Special Fund, the International Monetary Fund, the Economic and Social Council, the International Co-operation Administration. There is to the very vocabulary of economic development something so thunderingly boring that intelligent men hastily close their books when they see an investment scheme in the next paragraph, and honest, earnest housewives find themselves dizzy with all the initials of international philanthropy, and all the digits of enlightened self-interest.

ANYONE SURVEYING THIS TUMULT of assistance from a distance, and collating it as I am with the historical fact of Huddersfield, will be impressed, I think, by its volume and variety, but depressed by its flabby, ambivalent, and often amateurish lack of co-ordinated purpose. There is precious little international teamwork in boosting the progress of the poor world. The immense national programmes of aid and investment are often tarnished by ulterior motives—most of them are "tied loans," which means that they must be used to buy the products of the lending State. Methods of lending or giving money are often slipshod, by professional banking standards, and sometimes suspect. Many good men are concerned with the problem, but so are many bad ones—duds, charlatans, men with an eye to an easy dollar, a decoration, or a safe pension, myriads of those perpetual wanderers through the international organisations of the world, UNRRA to UNICEF to WHO to UNESCO, who bring to the sphere of global philanthropy a suggestion of cultured but ineffective dilettantism.

It all looks a mess, by the taut standards of the old industrialists. Money flows criss-cross in all directions, often wasted in projects of showy extravagance, often helping to keep an autocrat in furs and convertibles or a slippery contractor in business. Great things indeed are happening everywhere: a few hard-headed institutions, like the World Bank, manage to inject some currents of sound sense into the *mélange*; but impelled as this great historical process is by an endless range of motives, from true-blue jingoism to sober economic necessity, the waste of time, effort, and money is grim to contemplate. The word "development" springs neat and forceful from every pundit's lips, but translated on the ground into bridges or bank balances, interest rates or tied loans, it becomes a much more sprawling and disheartening abstraction.

DISHEARTENING? There are times when the most hopeful of the experts, surveying the tumbled scene before him, must shrug his shoulders and pine for the comforting tabulations of Harvard or L.S.E. Do not despair, though. Instead, go back to Huddersfield again, whose people have lived longest of all in the company of the machine, and can best demonstrate what hope or misery the aspirant nations can expect.

Do not be despondent, as the street lamps flicker sadly on, and you turn up your collar against that steely moorland wind. Poor Susan is long since reconciled. Huddersfield has suffered indeed for her priority among the machine cities—suffered with mean dank houses, warped young limbs, ugliness and rotted lungs. Nearly two centuries have passed, though, since she reached that moment of harsh exuberance—that Take-Off, that Illumination of Choices, that Application of Science and Savings. She has mellowed and stretched her arms since then, and grown out of her brutalities. She will never be a patrician sort of place, for all her mill-owners' Rolls-Royces. She is not stylish or open-handed—"a middling stinter," is how Yorkshiremen describe her. She has developed over the decades a parochial complacency that is often irritating and sometimes ludicrous—you can buy *Oggi* or *Paris Match* in her streets any afternoon, but this is Yorkshire, lad, and you still can't buy the Manchester evening papers. She lacks the finesse of Bangkok, say, the nobility of Addis, the cultivation of Bogota, the sizzle of Cagliari, even the martial swagger

of Rawalpindi, astrut with bugle-calls and epaulettes above the Indus basin.

But there, her prides and snobberies are straightforward enough, based as they are upon hard cash and the state of the curtains, and she has a keen straight eye for quality, fair trading, and square deals. You still have to push in Huddersfield, but nobody will much care whether your arm is black, brown, or grubby white, your creed Christian, Muslim, or conventionally pagan. Once no more than a shudder in a fastidious mind, or a pang in a home-sick bosom, Huddersfield now commands fierce loyalties and affectionate respect—many a poshly educated young man, sent away to expensive boarding-school, soon reverts to his Huddersfield brogue when he returns to Chapel Hill for the holidays.

She is shabby still, but not heartless, for she has virtually eliminated poverty and illiteracy. She is a clubbable town, rich in choral societies and brass bands, the Invalid Tricycle Club, the Rough Stuff Fellowship, the noisy young Ludites on their scooters. She is a town of deep stability, where a panic is difficult to conceive, and a crust of blunt pessimism barely disguises an unshakeable self-confidence. She is seldom vulgar, curmudgeonly, or ostentatious. She no longer feels *nouveau riche*. She is, in short, no longer an exciting or a provocative place, but she has evolved a society that is, as human institutions go, strong, decent, and kindly.

So SHE LOOKS, nearly two centuries after the event, and this is a comfort: for as we have seen, the revolution that started in these northern valleys, and is still fizzling and erupting in all the continents of the earth, is not always pleasant in its origins. Huddersfield offers us a last reassurance. In Cairo or Kiruna, in the mines of Mauretania or the Indian steel towns, they need no longer look towards her with envy, but they can draw upon her for encouragement. The cruelty, she seems to say, need not be permanent. The degradation will not last.

All this you will see clearly, if you rub your sense of history: but if you do not have it handy, then the dusk will fall like a damp blanket over Huddersfield, the soot will dirty your collar and clog your nostrils, the coffee-shop door will slam in your face, and you will pity from the bottom of your heart those poor ignorant innocents, the world over, who pine to exchange their pastorals for the blast of the foundries and the clatter of engines in the half-light.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Matryona's Home

A HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR kilometres from Moscow trains were still slowing down to a crawl a good six months after it happened. Passengers stood glued to the windows or went out to stand by the doors. Was the line under repair, or what? Would the train be late?

It was all right. Past the crossing the train picked up speed again and the passengers went back to their seats.

Only the engine-drivers knew what it was all about.

The engine-drivers and I.

IN THE SUMMER of 1953 I was coming back from the hot and dusty desert, just following my nose—so long as it led me back to Russia. Nobody waited or wanted me at any particular place, because I was a little matter of ten years overdue. I just wanted to get to the central belt, away from the great heats, close to the leafy muttering of forests. I wanted to efface myself, to lose myself in deepest Russia . . . if it was still anywhere to be found.

A year earlier I should have been lucky to get a job carrying a hod this side of the Urals. They wouldn't have taken me as an electrician on a decent construction job. And I had an itch to teach. Those who knew told me that it was a waste of money buying a ticket, that I should have a journey for nothing.

But things were beginning to move. When I went up the stairs of the N— Oblast Education Department and asked for the Personnel

Section, I was surprised to find Personnel sitting behind a glass partition, like in a chemist's shop, instead of the usual black leather-padded door. I went timidly up to the window, bowed, and asked, "Please, do you need any mathematicians somewhere where the trains don't run? I should like to settle there for good."

They passed every dot and comma in my documents through a fine comb, went from one room to another, made telephone calls. It was something out of the ordinary for them too—people always wanted the towns, the bigger the better. And lo and behold, they found just the place for me—Vysokoe Polye. The very sound of it gladdened my heart.

VYSOKOE POLYE did not belie its name. It stood on rising ground, with gentle hollows and other little hills around it. It was enclosed by an unbroken ring of forest. There was a pool behind a weir. Just the place where I wouldn't mind living and dying. I spent a long time sitting on a stump in a coppice and wishing with all my heart that I didn't need breakfast and dinner every day but could just stay here and listen to the branches brushing against the roof in the night, with not a wireless anywhere to be heard and the whole world silent.

Alas, nobody baked bread in Vysokoe Polye. There was nothing edible on sale. The whole village lugged its victuals in sacks from the big town.

I went back to Personnel Section and raised my voice in prayer at the little window. At first they wouldn't even talk to me. But then they started going from one room to another, made a telephone call, scratched with their pens, and stamped on my orders the word "*Torfoprodukt*."

Torfoprodukt? Turgenev never knew that

THIS story was translated by H. T. Willetts.
A note on the author by Max Hayward will
be found on p. 96 of this number.

you can put words like that together in Russian.

On the station building at Torfoprodukt, an antiquated temporary hut of grey wood, hung a stern notice, BOARD TRAINS ONLY FROM THE PASSENGERS' HALL. A further message had been scratched on the boards with a nail, *And Without Tickets*. And by the booking-office, with the same melancholy wit, somebody had carved for all time the words, *No Tickets*. It was only later that I fully appreciated the meaning of these addenda. Getting to Torfoprodukt was easy. But not getting away.

Here too, deep and trackless forests had once stood, and were still standing after the Revolution. Then they were chopped down by the peat-cutters and the neighbouring kolkhoz. Its chairman, Shashkov, had razed quite a few hectares of timber and sold it at a good profit down in Odessa oblast.

The workers' settlement sprawled untidily among the peat bogs—monotonous shacks from the 'thirties, and little houses with carved façades and glass verandahs, put up in the 'fifties. But inside these houses I could see no partitions reaching up to the ceilings, so there was no hope of renting a room with four real walls.

Over the settlement hung smoke from the factory chimney. Little locomotives ran this way and that along narrow-gauge railway lines, giving out more thick smoke and piercing whistles, pulling loads of dirty brown peat in slabs and briquettes. I could safely assume that in the evening a loudspeaker would be crying its heart out over the door of the club and there would be drunks roaming the streets and, sooner or later, sticking knives in each other.

This was what my dream about a quiet corner of Russia had brought me to...when I could have stayed where I was and lived in an adobe hut looking out on the desert, with a fresh breeze at night and only the starry dome of the sky overhead.

I couldn't sleep on the station bench, and as soon as it started getting light I went for another stroll round the settlement. This time I saw a tiny market-place. Only one woman stood there at that early hour, selling milk, and I took a bottle and started drinking it on the spot.

I was struck by the way she talked. Instead of a normal speaking voice she used an ingratiating sing-song, and her words were the ones I was longing to hear when I left Asia for this place.

"Drink, and God bless you. You must be a stranger round here?"

"And where are you from?" I asked, feeling more cheerful.

I learnt that the peat workings weren't the only thing, that over the railway lines there was a hill, and over the hill a village, that this village was Talnovo, and it had been there ages ago, when the "gypsy woman" lived in the big house and the wild woods stood all round. And further on there was a whole countryside full of villages—Chaslitsy, Ovintsy, Spudni, Shevertni, Shestimirovo, deeper and deeper into the woods, farther and farther from the railway, up towards the lakes.

The names were like a soothing breeze to me. They held a promise of backwoods Russia. I asked my new acquaintance to take me to Talnovo after the market was over, and find a house for me to lodge in.

It appeared that I was a lodger worth having: in addition to my rent, the school offered a lorry-load of peat for the winter to whoever took me. The woman's ingratiating smile gave way to a thoughtful frown. She had no room herself, because she and her husband were "keeping" her aged mother, so she took me first to one lot of relatives then to another. But there wasn't a separate room to be had and both places were crowded and noisy.

We had come to a dammed-up stream that was short of water and had a little bridge over it. No other place in all the village took my fancy as this did: there were two or three willows, a lop-sided house, ducks swimming on the pond, geese shaking themselves as they stepped out of the water.

"Well, perhaps we might just call on Matryona," said my guide, who was getting tired of me by now. "Only it isn't so neat and cosy-like in her house, neglects things she does. She's unwell."

MATRYONA'S HOUSE stood quite nearby. Its row of four windows looked out on the cold backs, the two slopes of the roof were covered with shingles, and a little attic window was decorated in the old Russian style. But the shingles were rotting, the beam-ends of the house and the once mighty gates had turned grey with age, and there were gaps in the little shelter over the gate.

The small door let into the gate was fastened, but instead of knocking my companion just put her hand under and turned the catch, a simple device to prevent animals from straying. The

yard was not covered, but there was a lot under the roof of the house. As you went through the outer door a short flight of steps rose to a roomy landing, which was open to the roof high overhead. To the left, other steps led up to the top room, which was a separate structure with no stove, and yet another flight down to the basement. To the right lay the house proper, with its attic and its cellar.

It had been built a long time ago, built sturdily, to house a big family, and now one lonely woman of nearly sixty lived in it.

When I went into the cottage she was lying on the Russian stove under a heap of those indeterminate dingy rags which are so precious to a working man or woman.

The spacious room, and especially the best part near the windows, was full of rubber-plants in pots and tubs standing on stools and benches. They peopled the householder's loneliness like a speechless but living crowd. They had been allowed to run wild, and they took up all the scanty light on the north side. In what was left of the light, and half-hidden by the stove-pipe, the mistress of the house looked yellow and weak. You could see from her clouded eyes that illness had drained all the strength out of her.

While we talked she lay on the stove face downwards, without a pillow, her head towards the door, and I stood looking up at her. She showed no pleasure at getting a lodger, just complained about the wicked disease she had. She was just getting over an attack; it didn't come upon her every month, but when it did, "It hangs on two or three days so as I shan't manage to get up and wait on you. I've room and to spare, you can live here if you like."

Then she went over the list of other housewives with whom I should be quieter and cosier, and wanted me to make the round of them. But I had already seen that I was destined to settle in this dimly lit house with the tarnished mirror in which you couldn't see yourself, and the two garish posters (one advertising books, the other about the harvest), bought for a rouble each to brighten up the walls.

Matryona Vasilyevna made me go off round the village again, and when I called on her the second time she kept trying to put me off, "We're not clever, we can't cook, I don't know how we shall suit. . . ." But this time she was on her feet when I got there, and I thought I saw a glimmer of pleasure in her eyes to see me back. We reached agreement about the rent and the load of peat which the school would deliver.

LATER ON I found out that, year in year out, it was a long time since Matryona Vasilyevna had earned a single rouble. She didn't get a pension. Her relatives gave her very little help. In the kolkhoz she had worked not for money but for credits; the marks recording her labour-days in her well-thumbed work-book.

So I moved in with Matryona Vasilyevna. We didn't divide the room. Her bed was in the corner between the door and the stove, and I unfolded my camp-bed by one window and pushed Matryona's beloved rubber-plants out of the light to make room for a little table by another. The village had electric light, laid on back in the 'twenties, from Shatury. The newspapers were writing about "Ilyich's little lamps," but the peasants talked wide-eyed about "Tsar Fire."

Some of the better-off people in the village might not have thought Matryona's house much of a home, but it kept us snug enough that autumn and winter. The roof still held the rain out, and the freezing winds could not blow the warmth of the stove away all at once, though it was cold by morning, especially when the wind blew on the shabby side.

IN ADDITION TO Matryona and myself, a cat, some mice, and some cockroaches lived in the house.

The cat was no longer young, and gammy-legged as well. Matryona had taken her in out of pity, and she had stayed. She walked on all four feet but with a heavy limp: one of her feet was sore and she favoured it. When she jumped from the stove she didn't land with the soft sound a cat usually makes, but with a heavy thud as three of her feet struck the floor at once—such a heavy thud that until I got used to it, it gave me a start. This was because she stuck three feet out together to save the fourth.

It wasn't because the cat couldn't deal with them that there were mice in the cottage: she would pounce into the corner like lightning, and come back with a mouse between her teeth. But the mice were usually out of reach because somebody, back in the good old days, had stuck embossed wallpaper of a greenish colour on Matryona's walls, and not just one layer of it but five. The layers held together all right, but in many places the whole lot had come away from the wall, giving the room a sort of inner skin. Between the timber of the walls and the skin of wallpaper the mice had made themselves runs where they impudently scampered about, running at times right up to the ceiling. The cat

followed their scamperings with angry eyes, but couldn't get at them.

Sometimes the cat ate cockroaches as well, but they made her sick. The only thing the cockroaches respected was the partition which screened the mouth of the Russian stove and the kitchen from the best part of the room.

They did not creep into the best room. But the kitchen at night swarmed with them, and if I went in late in the evening for a drink of water and switched on the light the whole floor, the big bench, and even the wall would be one rustling brown mass. From time to time I brought home some borax from the school laboratory and we mixed it with dough to poison them. There would be fewer cockroaches for a while, but Matryona was afraid that we might poison the cat as well. We stopped putting down poison and the cockroaches multiplied anew.

At night, when Matryona was already asleep and I was working at my table, the occasional rapid scamper of mice behind the wallpaper would be drowned in the sustained and ceaseless rustling of cockroaches behind the screen, like the sound of the sea in the distance. But I got used to it because there was nothing evil in it, nothing dishonest. Rustling was life to them.

I even got used to the crude beauty on the poster, forever reaching out from the wall to offer me Belinsky, Panferov, and a pile of other books—but never saying a word. I got used to everything in Matryona's cottage.

MATRYONA got up at four or five in the morning. Her wall-clock was twenty-seven years old, and had been bought in the village shop. It was always fast, but Matryona didn't worry about that—just so long as it didn't lose and make her late in the morning. She switched on the light behind the kitchen screen and moving quietly, considerably, doing her best not to make a noise, she lit the stove, went to milk the goat (all the livestock she had was this one dirty-white goat with twisted horns), fetched water and boiled it in three iron pots: one for me, one for herself, and one for the goat. She fetched potatoes from the cellar, picking out the littlest for the goat, little ones for herself and egg-sized ones for me. There were no big ones, because her garden was sandy, had not been manured since the war and was always planted with potatoes, potatoes, and potatoes again, so that it wouldn't grow big ones.

I scarcely heard her about her morning tasks. I slept late, woke up in the wintry daylight,

stretched a bit and stuck my head out from under my blanket and my sheep-skin. These, together with the prisoner's jerkin round my legs and a sack stuffed with straw underneath me, kept me warm in bed even on nights when the cold wind rattled our wobbly windows from the north. When I heard the discreet noises on the other side of the screen I spoke to her, slowly and deliberately.

"Good morning, Matryona Vasilyevna!"

And every time the same good-natured words came to me from behind the screen. They began with a warm, throaty gurgle, the sort of sound grandmothers make in fairy tales.

"M-m-m... same to you too!"

And after a little while, "Your breakfast's ready for you now."

She didn't announce what was for breakfast, but it was easy to guess: taters in their jackets or tatty soup (as everybody in the village called it), or barley gruel (no other grain could be bought in Torfoprodukt that year, and even the barley you had to fight for, because it was the cheapest and people bought it up by the sack to fatten their pigs on it). It wasn't always salted as it should be, it was often slightly burnt, it furred the palate and the gums, and it gave me heartburn.

But Matryona wasn't to blame: there was no butter in Torfoprodukt either, margarine was desperately short, and only mixed cooking fat was plentiful, and when I got to know it I saw that the Russian stove was not convenient for cooking: the cook cannot see the pots and they are not heated evenly all round. I suppose the stove came down to our ancestors from the Stone Age because you can stoke it up once before daylight, and food and water, mash and swill, will keep warm in it all day long. And it keeps you warm while you sleep.

I ATE EVERYTHING that was cooked for me without demur, patiently putting aside anything uncalled-for that I came across: a hair, a bit of peat, a cockroach's leg. I hadn't the heart to find fault with Matryona. After all, she had warned me herself,

"We aren't clever, we can't cook—I don't know how we shall suit..."

"Thank you," I said quite sincerely.

"What for? For what is your own?" she answered, disarming me with a radiant smile. And, with a guileless look of her faded blue eyes, she would ask, "And what shall I cook you for just now?"

For just now meant for supper. I ate twice a

day, like at the front. What could I order for just now? It would have to be one of the same old things, taters or tatty soup.

I resigned myself to it, because I had learnt by now not to look for the meaning of life in food. More important to me was the smile on her roundish face, which I tried in vain to catch when at last I had earned enough to buy a camera. As soon as she saw the cold eye of the lens upon her Matryona assumed a strained or else an exaggeratedly severe expression.

Just once I did manage to get a snap of her looking through the window into the street and smiling at something.

Matryona had a lot of worries that winter. Her neighbours put it into her head to try and get a pension. She was all alone in the world, and when she began to be seriously ill she had been dismissed from the kolkhoz as well. Injustices had piled up, one on top of another. She was ill, but not regarded as a disabled person. She had worked for a quarter of a century in the kolkhoz, but it was a kolkhoz and not a factory, so she was not entitled to a pension for herself. She could only try and get one for her husband, for the loss of her bread-winner. But she had had no husband for twelve years now, not since the beginning of the war, and it wasn't easy to obtain all the particulars from different places about his length of service and how much he had earned. What a bother it was getting those forms through! Getting somebody to certify that he'd earned, say, 300 roubles a month; that she lived alone and nobody helped her; what year she was born in. Then all this had to be taken to the pensions office. And taken somewhere else to get all the mistakes corrected. And taken back again. Then you had to find out whether they would give you a pension.

To make it all more difficult the Pensions Office was twenty kilometres east of Talnovo, the Rural Council Offices ten kilometres to the west, the Factory District Council an hour's walk to the north. They made her run around from office to office for two months on end, to get an *i* dotted or a *z* crossed. Every trip took a day. She goes down to the rural district council—and the secretary isn't there to-day. Secretaries of rural councils often aren't here to-day. So come again to-morrow. To-morrow the secretary is in, but he hasn't got his rubber stamp. So come again the next day. And the day after that back she goes yet again, because all her papers are pinned together and some cock-eyed clerk has signed the wrong one.

"They shove me around, Ignatich," she used to complain to me after these fruitless excursions. "Worn out with it I am."

BUT SHE SOON brightened up. I found that she had a sure means of putting herself in a good humour. She worked. She would grab a shovel and go off to lift potatoes. Or she would tuck a sack under her arm and go after peat. Or take a wicker basket and look for berries deep in the woods. When she'd been bending her back to bushes instead of office desks for a while, and her shoulders were aching from a heavy load, Matryona would come back cheerful, at peace with the world and smiling her nice smile.

"I'm on to a good thing now, Ignatich. I know where to go for it (peat she meant), a lovely place it is."

"But surely my peat is enough, Matryona Vasilyevna? There's a whole lorry-load of it."

"Pooh! Your peat! As much again, and then as much again, that might be enough. When the winter gets really stiff and the wind's battling at the windows, it blows the heat out of the house faster than you can make the stove up. Last year we got heaps and heaps of it. I'd have had three loads in by now. But they're out to catch us. They've summoned one woman from our village already."

That's how it was. The frightening breath of winter was already in the air. There were forests all round, and no fuel to be had anywhere. Excavators roared away in the bogs, but there was no peat on sale to the villagers. It was delivered, free, to the bosses and to the people round the bosses, and teachers, doctors, and workers got a load each. The people of Talnovo were not supposed to get any peat, and they weren't supposed to ask about it. The chairman of the kolkhoz walked about the village looking people in the eye while he gave his orders or stood chatting, and talked about anything you liked except fuel. He was stocked-up. Who said anything about winter coming?

So just as in the old days they used to steal the squire's wood, now they pinched peat from the trust. The women went in parties of five or ten so that they would be less frightened. They went in the day-time. The peat cut during the summer had been stacked up all over the place to dry. That's the good thing about peat, it can't be carted off as soon as it's cut. It lies around drying till autumn, or, if the roads are bad, till the snow starts falling. This was when the

women used to come and take it. They could get six peats in a sack if it was damp, or ten if it was dry. A sackful weighed about two poods and it sometimes had to be carried over three kilometres. This was enough to make the stove up once. There were two hundred days in the winter. The Russian stove had to be lit in the mornings, and the "Dutch" stove in the evenings.

"Why beat about the bush?" said Matryona angrily to someone invisible. "Since there've been no more horses, what you can't heave around yourself you haven't got. My back never heals up. Winter you're pulling sledges, summer it's bundles on your back, it's God's truth I'm telling you."

The women went more than once in a day. On good days Matryona brought six sacks home. She piled my peat up where it could be seen, and hid her own under the passage way, boarding up the hole every night.

"If they don't just happen to think of it, the devils will never find it in their born days," said Matryona smiling and wiping the sweat from her brow.

What could the peat trust do? Its establishment didn't run to a watchman for every bog. I suppose they had to show a rich haul in their returns, and then write off so much for crumbling, so much washed away by the rain... Sometimes they would take it into their heads to put out patrols and try to catch the women as they came into the village. The women would drop their sacks and scatter. Or somebody would inform and there would be a house-to-house search. They would draw up a report on the stolen peat, and threaten a court action. The women would stop fetching it for a while, but the approach of winter drove them out with sledges in the middle of the night.

WHEN I HAD SEEN a little more of Matryona I noticed that apart from cooking and looking after the house, she had quite a lot of other jobs to do every day. She kept all her jobs, and the proper times for them, in her head and always knew when she woke up in the morning how her day would be occupied. Apart from fetching peat, and stumps which the tractors unearthed in the bogs, apart from the cranberries which she put to soak in big jars for the winter ("Give your teeth an edge, Ignatich," she used to say when she offered me some), apart from digging potatoes and all the coming and going to do with her pension, she had to get hay from some-

where for her one and only dirty-white goat.

"Why don't you keep a cow, Matryona?"

Matryona stood there in her grubby apron, by the opening in the kitchen screen, facing my table, and explained to me.

"Oh, Ignatich, there's enough milk from the goat for me. And if I started keeping a cow she'd eat me out of house and home in no time. You can't cut the grass by the railway track, because it belongs to the railway, and you can't cut any in the woods, because it belongs to the foresters, and they won't let me have any at the kolkhoz because I'm not a member any more, they reckon. And those who are members have to work there every day till the white flies swarm, and make their own hay when there's snow on the ground—what's the good of grass like that? In the old days they used to be sweating to get the hay in at midsummer, between the end of June and the end of July, while the grass was sweet and juicy..."

So it meant a lot of work for Matryona to gather enough hay for one skinny little goat. She took her sickle and a sack and went off early in the morning to places where she knew there was grass growing—round the edges of fields, on the roadside, on hummocks in the bog. When she had stuffed her sack with heavy fresh grass she dragged it home and spread it out in her yard to dry. From a sackful of grass she got one forkload of dry hay.

The farm had a new chairman, sent down from the town not long ago, and the first thing he did was to cut down the garden-plots for those who were not fit to work. He left Matryona fifteen hundredths of sand—when there were ten hundredths just lying idle on the other side of the fence. Yet when they were short of working hands, when the women dug in their heels and wouldn't budge, the chairman's wife would come to see Matryona. She was from the town as well, a determined woman whose short grey overcoat and intimidating glare gave her a somewhat military appearance. She walked into the house without so much as a good morning and looked sternly at Matryona. Matryona was uneasy.

"Well now, Comrade Vasilyevna," said the chairman's wife, drawing out her words. "You will have to help the kolkhoz! You will have to go and help cart muck out to-morrow!"

A little smile of forgiveness wrinkled Matryona's face—as though she understood the embarrassment which the chairman's wife must feel not being able to pay her for her work.

"Well—er," she droned, "I'm not well, of course, and I'm not attached to you any more..." then she hurried to correct herself, "what time should I come then?"

"And bring your own fork!" the chairman's wife instructed her. Her stiff skirt crackled as she walked away.

"Think of that!" grumbled Matryona as the door closed. "Bring your own fork! They've got neither forks nor shovels on the kolkhoz. And I don't have a man who'll put a handle on for me!"

She went on thinking about it out loud all evening.

"What's the good of talking, Ignatch. I must help, of course. Only the way they work it's all a waste of time—don't know whether they're coming or going. The women stand propped up on their shovels and waiting for the factory hooter to blow twelve o'clock. Or else they get on to adding up who's earned what and who's turned up for work and who hasn't. Now what I call work, there isn't a sound out of anybody, only... oh dear, dear—dinner time's soon rolled round—what, getting dark already..."

In the morning she went off with her fork.

BUT IT WASN'T just the kolkhoz—any distant relative, or just a neighbour, could come to Matryona of an evening and say, "Come and give me a hand to-morrow, Matryona. We'll finish lifting the potatoes."

Matryona couldn't say no. She gave up what she should be doing next and went to help her neighbour, and when she came back she would say without a trace of envy, "Ah, you should see the size of her potatoes, Ignatch! It was a joy to dig them up. I didn't want to leave the allotment, God's truth I didn't."

Needless to say, not a garden could be ploughed without Matryona's help. The women of Talnovo had got it neatly worked out that it was a longer and harder job for one woman to dig her garden with a spade than for six of them to put themselves in harness and plough six gardens. So they sent for Matryona to help them.

"Well—did you pay her?" I asked sometimes.

"She won't take money. You have to try and hide it on her when she's not looking."

Matryona had yet another troublesome chore when her turn came to feed the herdsmen. One of them was a hefty deaf mute, the other a boy who was never without a cigarette in his drool-

ing mouth. Matryona's turn only came round every six weeks, but it put her to great expense. She went to the shop to buy tinned fish, and was lavish with sugar and butter, things she never ate herself. It seems that the housewives showed off in this way, trying to outdo each other in feeding the herdsmen.

"You've got to be careful with tailors and herdsmen," Matryona explained. "They'll spread your name all round the village if something doesn't suit them."

And every now and then attacks of serious illness broke in on this life that was already crammed with troubles. Matryona would be off her feet for a day or two, lying flat out on the stove. She didn't complain, and didn't groan, but she hardly stirred either. On these days, Masha, Matryona's closest friend from her earliest years, would come to look after the goat and light the stove. Matryona herself ate nothing, drank nothing, asked for nothing. To call in the doctor from the clinic at the settlement would have seemed strange in Talnovo, and would have given the neighbours something to talk about—what does she think she is, a lady? They did call her in once, and she arrived in a real temper and told Matryona to come down to the clinic when she was on her feet again. Matryona went, although she didn't really want to; they took specimens and sent them off to the district hospital—and that's the last anybody heard about it. Matryona was partly to blame herself.

But there was work waiting to be done, and Matryona soon started getting up again, moving slowly at first and then as briskly as ever.

"You never saw me in the old days, Ignatch. I'd lift any sack you liked, I didn't think five poods was too heavy. My father-in-law used to say, 'Matryona, you'll break your back.' And my brother-in-law didn't have to come and help me lift on the cart. Our horse was a war-horse, a big strong one..."

"What do you mean, a war-horse?"

"They took ours for the war and gave us this one instead—he'd been wounded. But he turned out a bit spirited. Once he bolted with the sledge right into the lake, the men-folk hopped out of the way, but I grabbed the bridle, as true as I'm here, and stopped him... Full of oats that horse was. They liked to feed their horses well in our village. If a horse feels his oats he doesn't know what heavy means."

But Matryona was a long way from being fearless. She was afraid of fire, afraid of "the

lightning," and most of all she was for some reason afraid of trains.

"When I had to go to Cherusti the train came up from Nechaevka way with its great big eyes popping out and the rails humming away—put me in a proper fever. My knees started knocking. God's truth I'm telling you!" Matryona raised her shoulders as though she surprised herself.

"Maybe it's because they won't give people tickets, Matryona Vasilyevna?"

"At the window? They try to shove first-class tickets on to you. And the train was starting to move. We dashed about all over the place, 'Give us tickets for pity's sake.'

"The men-folk had climbed on top of the carriages. Then we found a door that wasn't locked and shoved straight in without tickets . . . and all the carriages were empty, they were all empty, you could stretch out on the seat if you wanted to. Why they wouldn't give us tickets, the hard-hearted parasites, I don't know. . . ."

STILL, BEFORE WINTER CAME Matryona's affairs were in a better state than ever before. They started paying her at last a pension of eighty roubles. Besides this she got just over a hundred from the school and me.

Some of her neighbours began to be envious.

"Hm! Matryona can live for ever now! If she had any more money she wouldn't know what to do with it at her age."

Matryona had herself some new felt boots made. She bought a new jerkin. And she had an overcoat made out of the worn-out railwayman's greatcoat given to her by the engine-driver from Cherusti who had married Kira, her foster-daughter. The hump-backed village tailor put a padded lining under the cloth and it made a marvellous coat, such as Matryona had never worn before in all her sixty years.

In the middle of winter Matryona sewed two hundred roubles into the lining of this coat for her funeral. This made her quite cheerful.

"Now my mind's a bit easier, Ignatich."

December went by, January went by—and in those two months Matryona's illness held off. She started going over to Masha's house more often in the evening, to sit chewing sunflower seeds with her. She didn't invite guests herself in the evening out of consideration for my work. Once, on the feast of the Epiphany, I came back from school and found a party going on and was introduced to Matryona's three sisters

who called her "nan-nan" or "nanny" because she was the oldest. Until then not much had been heard of the sisters in our cottage—perhaps they were afraid that Matryona might ask them for help.

But one ominous event cast a shadow on the holiday for Matryona. She went to the church five versts away for the blessing of the water, and put her pot down among the others. When the blessing was over the women went rushing and jostling to get their pots back again. There were a lot of women in front of Matryona and when she got there her pot was missing, and no other vessel had been left behind. The pot had vanished as though the devil had run off with it.

Matryona went around the worshippers asking them, "Has any of you girls accidentally mistook somebody else's holy water? In a pot?"

Nobody owned up. There had been some boys there, and boys got up to mischief sometimes. Matryona came home sad.

No one could say that Matryona was a devout believer. If anything, she was a heathen, and her strongest beliefs were superstitious. You mustn't go into the garden on the fast of St. John or there would be no harvest next year. A blizzard meant that somebody had hanged himself. If you pinched your foot in the door you could expect a guest. All the time I lived with her I didn't once see her say her prayers or even cross herself. But, whatever job she was doing, she began with a "God bless us," and she never failed to say "God bless you," when I set out for school. Perhaps she did say her prayers, but on the quiet, either because she was shy or because she didn't want to embarrass me. There were ikons on the walls. Ordinary days they were left in darkness, but for the vigil of a great feast, or on the morning of a holiday, Matryona would light the little lamp.

She had fewer sins on her conscience than her gammy-legged cat. The cat did kill mice. . . .

NOW THAT HER LIFE WAS running more smoothly, Matryona started listening more carefully to my radio. (I had, of course, installed a speaker, or as Matryona called it, a pecker.)

When they announced on the radio that some new machine had been invented, I heard Matryona grumbling out in the kitchen, "New ones all the time, nothing but new ones. People don't want to work with the old ones any more, where are we going to store them all?"

There was a programme about the seeding of clouds from aeroplanes. Matryona, listening

up on the stove, shook her head, "Oh dear, dear, dear, they'll do away with one of the two—summer or winter."

Once Chaliapin was singing Russian folk-songs. Matryona stood listening for a long time before she gave her emphatic verdict, "Queer singing, not our sort of singing."

"You can't mean that, Matryona Vasilyevna ... just listen to him."

She listened a bit longer, and pursed her lips, "No, it's wrong. It isn't our sort of tune, and he's tricky with his voice."

She made up for this another time. They were broadcasting some of Glinka's songs. After half a dozen of these drawing-room ballads, Matryona suddenly came from behind the screen clutching her apron, with a flush on her face and a film of tears over her dim eyes.

"That's our sort of singing," she said in a whisper.

SO MATRYONA and I got used to each other and took each other for granted. She never pestered me with questions about myself. I don't know whether she was lacking in normal female curiosity or just tactful, but she never once asked if I had been married. All the Talnovo women kept at her to find out about me. Her answer was, "You want to know—you ask him. All I know is he's from distant parts."

And when I got round to telling her that I had spent a lot of time in prison she said nothing but just nodded, as though she had already suspected it.

And I thought of Matryona only as the helpless old woman she was now, and didn't try to rake up her past, didn't even suspect that there was anything to be found there.

I knew that Matryona had got married before the Revolution and come to live in the house I now shared with her, that she had gone "to the stove" immediately. (She had no mother-in-law and no older sister-in-law, so it was her job to put the pots in the oven on the very first morning of her married life.) I knew that she had had six children and that they had all died very young, so that there were never two of them alive at once. Then there was a sort of foster-daughter, Kira. Matryona's husband had not come back from the last war. She received no notification of his death. Men from the village who had served in the same company said that he might have been taken prisoner, or he might have been killed and his body not found. In the eight years that had gone by since the war

Matryona had decided that he was not alive. It was a good thing that she thought so. If he was still alive he was probably in Brazil or Australia, and married again. The village of Talnovo, and the Russian language, would be fading from his memory.

ONE DAY, when I got back from school, I found a guest in the house. A tall, dark man, with his hat on his lap, was sitting on a chair which Matryona had moved up to the Dutch stove in the middle of the room. His face was completely surrounded by bushy black hair with hardly a trace of grey in it. His thick black moustaches ran into his full black beard, so that his mouth could hardly be seen. Black side-whiskers merged with the black locks which hung down from his crown, leaving only the tips of his ears visible; and broad black eyebrows met in a wide double span. But the front of his head as far as the crown was a spacious bald dome. His whole appearance made an impression of wisdom and dignity. He sat squarely on his chair, with his hands folded on his stick, and his stick resting vertically on the floor, in an attitude of patient expectation, and he obviously hadn't much to say to Matryona who was busy behind the screen.

When I came in he eased his majestic head round towards me and suddenly addressed me, "Master, I can't see you very well. My son goes to your school. Grigoriev, Antoshka..."

There was no need for him to say any more. ... However strongly inclined I felt to help this worthy old man I knew and dismissed in advance all the pointless things he was going to say. Antoshka Grigoriev was a plump, red-faced lad in 8-D who looked like a cat that's swallowed the cream. He seemed to think that he came to school for a rest and sat at his desk with a lazy smile on his face. Needless to say, he never did his home-work. But the worst of it was that he had been put up into the next class from year to year because our district, and indeed the whole oblast and the neighbouring oblasts, were famous for the high percentage of passes they obtained, and the school had to make an effort to keep its record up. So Antoshka had got it clear in his mind that however much the teachers threatened him they would put him up in the end, and there was no need for him to learn anything. He just laughed at us. There he sat in the eighth class, and he hadn't even mastered his decimals and didn't know one triangle from another. In the first two terms of

the school year I had kept him firmly below the pass line and the same treatment awaited him in the third.

But now this half-blind old man, who should have been Antoshka's grandfather rather than his father, had come to humble himself before me—how could I tell him that the school had been deceiving him for years, and that I couldn't go on deceiving him, because I didn't want to ruin the whole class, to become a liar and a fake, to start despising my work and my profession.

For the time being I patiently explained that his son had been very slack, that he told lies at school and at home, that his mark-book must be checked frequently, and that we must both take him severely in hand.

"Severe as you like, master," he assured me, "I beat him every week now. And I've got a heavy hand."

While we were talking I remembered that Matryona had once interceded for Antoshka Grigoriev, but I hadn't asked what relation of hers he was and I had refused to do what she wanted. Matryona was standing in the kitchen doorway like a mute suppliant on this occasion too. When Faddei Mironovich left saying that he would call on me to see how things were going, I asked her, "I can't make out what relation this Antoshka is to you, Matryona Vasilyevna."

"My brother-in-law's son," said Matryona shortly, and went out to milk the goat.

When I'd worked it out I realised that this determined old man with the black hair was the brother of the missing husband.

The long evening went by, and Matryona didn't bring up the subject again. But late at night, when I had stopped thinking about the old man and was working in a silence broken only by the rustling of the cockroaches and the heavy tick of the wall-clock, Matryona suddenly spoke from her dark corner, "You know, Ignatich, I nearly married him once."

I had forgotten that Matryona was in the room. I hadn't heard a sound from her—and suddenly her voice came out of the darkness, as agitated as if the old man were still trying to win her.

I could see that Matryona had been thinking about nothing else all evening.

She got up from her wretched rag bed and walked slowly towards me, as though she were following her own words. I sat back in my chair and caught my first glimpse of a quite different Matryona.

THERE WAS NO OVERHEAD LIGHT in our big room with its forest of rubber-plants. The table lamp cast a ring of light round my exercise books, and when I tore my eyes away from it the rest of the room seemed to be half-dark and faintly tinged with pink. I thought I could see the same pinkish glow in her usually sallow cheeks.

"He was the first one who came courting me, before Yefim did... he was his brother... the older one... I was nineteen and Faddei was twenty-three... They lived in this very same house. Their house it was. Their father built it."

I looked round the room automatically. Instead of the old grey house rotting under the faded green skin of wallpaper where the mice had their playground, I suddenly saw new timbers, freshly trimmed, and not yet discoloured, and caught the cheerful smell of pine-tar.

"Well, and what happened then?"

"That summer we went to sit in the coppice together," she whispered. "There used to be a coppice where the stable-yard is now. They chopped it down... I was just going to marry him, Ignatich. Then the German war started. They took Faddei in the army."

She let fall these few words—and suddenly the blue and white and yellow July of the year 1914 burst into flower before my eyes: the sky still peaceful, the floating clouds, the people sweating to get the ripe corn in. I imagined them side by side, the black-haired Hercules with a scythe over his shoulder, and the red-faced girl clasping a sheaf. And there was singing out under the open sky, such songs as nobody can sing nowadays, with all the machines in the fields.

"He went to the war—and vanished. For three years I kept to myself and waited. Never a sign of life did he give..."

Matryona's round face looked out at me from an elderly threadbare head-scarf. As she stood there in the gentle reflected light from my lamp her face seemed to lose its slovenly workaday covering of wrinkles, and she was a scared young girl again with a frightening decision to make.

Yes... I could see it... The trees shed their leaves, the snow fell and melted. They ploughed and sowed and reaped again. Again the trees shed their leaves, and snow fell. There was a revolution. Then another revolution. And the whole world was turned upside down.

"Their mother died and Yefim came to court me. You wanted to come to our house, he says, so come. He was a year younger than me, Yefim was. It's a saying with us—sensible girls get

married after Michaelmas, and silly ones at midsummer. They were short-handed. I got married.... The wedding was on St. Peter's day, and then about St. Nicholas' day in the winter he came back.... Faddei, I mean, from being a prisoner in Hungary."

Matryona covered her eyes.

I said nothing.

She turned towards the door as though somebody were standing there. "He stood there at the door. What a scream I let out! I wanted to throw myself at his feet!... but I couldn't. If it wasn't my own brother, he says, I'd take my axe to the both of you."

I shuddered. Matryona's despair or her terror, conjured up a vivid picture of him standing in the dark doorway and raising his axe to her.

But she quietened down and went on with her story in a sing-song voice, leaning on a chair-back, "Oh dear, dear me, the poor dear man! There were so many girls in the village—but he wouldn't marry. I'll look for one with the same name as you, a second Matryona, he said. And that's what he did—fetched himself a Matryona from Lipovka. They built themselves a house of their own and they're still living in it. You pass their place every day on your way to school."

So that was it. I realised that I had seen the other Matryona quite often. I didn't like her. She was always coming to my Matryona to complain about her husband—he beat her, he was stingy, he was working her to death. She would weep and weep, and her voice always had a tearful note in it. As it turned out, my Matryona had nothing to regret, with Faddei beating his Matryona every day of his life and being so tight-fisted.

"Mine never beat me once," said Matryona of Yefim. "He'd pitch into another man in the street, but me he never hit once.... Well, there was one time.... I quarrelled with my sister-in-law and he cracked me on the forehead with a spoon. I jumped up from the table and shouted at them, 'Hope it sticks in your gullets, you idle lot of beggars, hope you choke!' I said. And off I went into the woods. He never touched me any more."

Faddei didn't seem to have any cause for regret either. The other Matryona had borne him six children (my Antoshka was one of them, the littlest, the runt) and they had all lived, whereas the children of Matryona and Yefim had died, every one of them, before they reached the age of three months, without any illness.

"One daughter, Elena, was born and was alive when they washed her, and then she died right after.... My wedding was on St. Peter's day, and it was St. Peter's day I buried my sixth, Alexander."

The whole village decided that there was a curse on Matryona.

Matryona still nodded emphatic belief when she talked about it. "There was a *course* on me. They took me to a woman as used to be a nun to get cured, she set me off coughing and waited for the *course* to jump out of me like a frog. Only nothing jumped out...."

AND THE YEARS had run by like running water.... In 1941 they didn't take Faddei into the army because of his poor sight, but they took Yefim. And what had happened to the elder brother in the first war happened to the younger in the second... he vanished without trace. Only he never came back at all. The once noisy cottage was deserted, it became old and rotten, and Matryona, all alone in the world, grew old in it.

So she begged from the other Matryona, the cruelly beaten Matryona, a child of her womb (or was it a spot of Faddei's blood?), the youngest daughter, Kira.

For ten years she brought the girl up in her own house, in place of the children who had not lived. Then, not long before I arrived, she had married her off to a young engine-driver from Cherusti. The only help she got from anywhere came in dribs and drabs from Cherusti: a bit of sugar from time to time, or some of the fat when they killed a pig.

SICK AND SUFFERING, and feeling that death was not far off, Matryona had made known her will: the top room, which was a separate frame joined by tie-beams to the rest of the house, should go to Kira when she died. She said nothing about the house itself. Her three sisters had their eyes on it too.

That evening Matryona opened her heart to me. And, as often happens, no sooner were the hidden springs of her life revealed to me than I saw them in motion.

Kira arrived from Cherusti. Old Faddei was very worried. To get and keep a plot of land in Cherusti the young couple had to put up some sort of building. Matryona's top-room would do very well. There was nothing else they could put up, because there was no timber to be had anywhere. It wasn't Kira herself so much, and it

wasn't her husband, but old Faddei who was consumed with eagerness for them to get their hands on the plot at Cherusti.

He became a frequent visitor, laying down the law to Matryona and insisting that she should hand over the top room right away, before she died. On these occasions I saw a different Faddei. He was no longer an old man propped up by a stick, whom a push or a harsh word would bowl over. Although he was slightly bent by back-ache, he was still a fine figure; he had kept the vigorous black hair of a young man in his sixties; he was hot and urgent.

Matryona had not slept for two nights. It wasn't easy for her to make up her mind. She didn't grudge them the top room, which was standing there idle, any more than she ever grudged her labour or her belongings. And the top room was willed to Kira in any case. But the thought of breaking up the roof she had lived under for forty years was torture to her. Even I, a mere lodger, found it painful to think of them stripping away boards and wrenching out beams. For Matryona it was the end of everything.

But the people who were so insistent knew that she would let them break up her house before she died.

So FADDEI AND HIS SONS and sons-in-law came along one February morning, the blows of five axes were heard and boards creaked and cracked as they were wrenched out. Faddei's eyes twinkled busily. Although his back wasn't quite straight yet he scrambled nimbly up under the rafters and bustled about down below, shouting at his assistants. He and his father had built this house when he was a lad, a long time ago. The top room had been put up for him, the oldest son, to move in with his bride. And now he was furiously taking it apart, board by board, to carry it out of somebody else's yard.

After numbering the beam-ends and the ceiling boards they dismantled the top room and the store-room underneath it. The living-room, and what was left of the landing, they boarded up with a thin wall of deal. They did nothing about the cracks in the wall. It was plain to see that they were wreckers, not builders, and that they did not expect Matryona to be living there very long.

While the men were busy wrecking, the women were getting the drink ready for moving day—vodka would cost a lot too much. Kira brought a pood of sugar from Moscow oblast,

and Matryona carried the sugar and some bottles to the distiller under cover of night.

The timbers were carried out and stacked in front of the gates, and the engine-driver son-in-law went off to Cherusti for the tractor.

But the very same day a blizzard, or "a blower" as Matryona called it, began. It howled and whirled for two days and nights and buried the road under enormous drifts. Then, no sooner had they made the road passable and a couple of lorries gone by, than it got suddenly warmer. Within a day everything was thawing out, damp mist hung in the air and rivulets gurgled as they burrowed into the snow, and you could get stuck up to the top of your knee-boots.

TWO WEEKS PASSED before the tractor could get at the dismantled top room. All this time Matryona went around like someone lost. What particularly upset her was that her three sisters came and with one voice called her a fool for giving the top room away, said they didn't want to see her any more, and went off. At about the same time the lame cat strayed and was seen no more. It was just one thing after another. This was another blow to Matryona.

At last the frost got a grip on the slushy road. A sunny day came along and everybody felt more cheerful. Matryona had had a lucky dream the night before. In the morning she heard that I wanted to take a photograph of somebody at an old-fashioned hand-loom. (There were looms still standing in two cottages in the village; they wove coarse rugs on them.) She smiled shyly and said, "You just wait a day or two, Ignatich, I'll just send the top room there off and I'll put my loom up, I've still got it, you know, and then you can snap me. Honest to God!"

She was obviously attracted by the idea of posing in an old-fashioned setting. The red, frosty sun tinged the window of the curtailed passageway with a faint pink, and this reflected light warmed Matryona's face. People who are at ease with their consciences always have nice faces.

COMING BACK FROM SCHOOL before dusk I saw some movement near our house. A big new tractor-drawn sledge was already fully loaded, and there was no room for a lot of the timbers, so old Faddei's family and the helpers they had called in had nearly finished knocking together another home-made sledge. They were all working like madmen, in

the frenzy that comes upon people when there is a smell of good money in the air or when they are looking forward to some treat. They were shouting at one another and arguing.

They could not agree whether the sledges should be hauled separately or both together. One of Faddei's sons (the lame one) and the engine-driver son-in-law reasoned that the sledges couldn't both be taken at once because the tractor wouldn't be able to pull them. The man in charge of the tractor, a hefty fat-faced fellow who was very sure of himself, said hoarsely that he knew best, he was the driver, and he would take both at once. His motives were obvious: according to the agreement the engine-driver was paying him for the removal of the upper room not for the number of trips he had to make. He could never have made two trips in a night—twenty-five kilometres each way, and one return journey. And by morning he had to get the tractor back in the garage from which he had sneaked it out for this job on the side.

Old Faddei was impatient to get the top room moved that day, and at a nod from him his lads gave in. To the stout sledge in front they hitched the one which they had knocked together in such a hurry.

MATRYONA WAS RUNNING ABOUT amongst the men, fussing and helping them to heave the beams on to the sledge. Suddenly I noticed that she was wearing my jerkin and had dirtied the sleeves on the frozen mud round the beams. I was annoyed, and told her so. That jerkin held memories for me: it had kept me warm in the bad years.

This was the first time that I was ever angry with Matryona Vasilyevna.

Matryona was taken aback. "Oh dear, dear me," she said. "My poor head. I picked it up in a rush, you see, and never thought about it being yours. I'm sorry, Ignatchik."

And she took it off and hung it up to dry.

The loading was finished, and all the men who had been working, about ten of them, clattered past my table and dived under the curtain into the kitchen. I could hear the muffled rattle of glasses and, from time to time, the clink of a bottle, the voices got louder and louder, the boasting more reckless. The biggest braggart was the tractor-driver. The stench of hooch floated in to me. But they didn't go on drinking long. It was getting dark and they had to hurry. They began to leave. The tractor-driver came

out first, looking pleased with himself and fierce. The engine-driver son-in-law, Faddei's lame son and one of his nephews were going to Cherusti. The others went off home. Faddei was flourishing his stick, trying to overtake somebody and put him right about something. The lame son paused at my table to light up and suddenly started telling me how he loved Aunt Matryona, and that he had got married not long ago, and his wife had just had a son. Then they shouted for him and he went out. The tractor set up a roar outside.

After all the others had gone Matryona dashed out from behind the screen. She looked after them, anxiously shaking her head. She had put on her jerkin and her head-scarf. As she was going through the door she said to me, "Why ever couldn't they hire two? If one tractor had cracked up the other would have pulled them. What'll happen now, God only knows!"

She ran out after the others.

AFTER THE BOOZE-UP and the arguments and all the coming and going it was quieter than ever in the deserted cottage, and very chilly because the door had been opened so many times. I got into my jerkin and sat down to mark exercise books. The noise of the tractor died away in the distance.

An hour went by. And another. And a third. Matryona still hadn't come back, but I wasn't surprised. When she had seen the sledge off she must have gone round to her friend Masha.

Another hour went by. And yet another. Darkness and with it a deep silence had descended on the village. I couldn't understand at the time why it was so quiet. Later I found out that it was because all evening not a single train had gone along the line half a verst from the house. No sound was coming from my radio and I noticed that the mice were wilder than ever. Their scampering and scratching and squeaking behind the wallpaper was getting noisier and more defiant all the time.

I woke up. It was one o'clock in the morning and Matryona still hadn't come home.

Suddenly I heard several people talking loudly. They were still a long way off, but something told me that they were coming to our house. And sure enough I heard soon afterwards a heavy knock at the gate. A commanding voice, strange to me, yelled out an order to open up. I went out into the thick darkness with a torch. The whole village was asleep, there was no light in the windows, and the snow had started

melting in the last week so that it gave no reflected light. I turned the catch and let them in. Four men in great-coats went on towards the house. It's a very unpleasant thing to be visited at night by noisy people in great-coats.

When we got into the light though, I saw that two of them were wearing railway uniforms. The older of the two, a fat man with the same sort of face as the tractor-driver, asked, "Where's the woman of the house?"

"I don't know."

"This is the place the tractor with a sledge came from?"

"This is it."

"Had they been drinking before they left?"

All four of them were looking around them, screwing up their eyes in the dim light from the table-lamp. I realised that they had either made an arrest or wanted to make one.

"What's happened then?"

"Answer the question!"

"But..."

"Were they drunk when they went?"

"Were they drinking here?"

Had there been a murder? Or hadn't they been able to move the top room? The men in great-coats had me off balance. But one thing was certain: Matryona could do time for making hooch.

I stepped back to stand between them and the kitchen door. "I honestly didn't notice. I didn't see anything." (I really hadn't seen anything—only heard.) I made what was supposed to be a helpless gesture, drawing attention to the state of the cottage: a table-lamp shining peacefully on books and exercises, a crowd of frightened rubber plants, the austere couch of a recluse, not a sign of debauchery.

They had already seen for themselves, to their annoyance, that there had been no drinking in that room. They turned to leave, telling each other this wasn't where the drinking had been then, but it would be a good thing to put in that it was. I saw them out and tried to discover what had happened. It was only at the gate that one of them growled, "They've all been cut to bits. Can't find all the pieces."

"That's a detail. The express at 21.00 hours nearly went off the rails. That would have been something." And they walked briskly away.

I went back to the hut in a daze. Who were "they"? What did "all of them" mean? And where was Matryona?

I moved the curtain aside and went into the kitchen. The stink of hooch rose and hit me.

It was a deserted battlefield: a huddle of stools and benches, empty bottles lying around, one bottle half-full, glasses, the remains of pickled herring, onion, and sliced fat pork.

Everything was deathly still. Just cockroaches creeping unperturbed about the field of battle.

They had said something about the express at 21.00. Why? Perhaps I should have shown them all this? I began to wonder whether I had done right. But what a damnable way to behave—keeping their explanations for official persons only.

Suddenly the small gate creaked. I hurried out on to the landing, "Matryona Vasilyevna?"

The yard door opened, and Matryona's friend Masha came in, swaying and wringing her hands. "Matryona... our Matryona, Ignatich..."

I sat her down and through her tears she told me the story.

THE APPROACH TO THE CROSSING was a steep rise. There was no barrier. The tractor and the first sledge went over, but the tow-rope broke and the second sledge, the home-made one, got stuck on the crossing and started falling apart—the wood Faddei had given them to make the second sledge was no good. They towed the first sledge out of the way and went back for the second. They were fixing the tow-rope—the tractor-driver and Faddei's lame son, and Matryona, heaven knows what brought her there, was with them, between the tractor and the sledge. What help did she think she could be to the men? She was forever meddling in men's work. Hadn't a bolting horse nearly tipped her into the lake once, through a hole in the ice?

Why did she have to go to the damned crossing? She had handed over the top room, and owed nothing to anybody... The engine-driver kept a look-out in case the train from Cherusti rushed up on them. Its headlamps would be visible a long way off. But two engines coupled together came from the other direction, from our station, backing without lights. Why they were without lights nobody knows. When an engine is backing, coal-dust blows into the driver's eyes from the tender and he can't see very well. The two engines flew into them and crushed the three people between the tractor and the sledge to pulp. The tractor was wrecked, the sledge was matchwood, the rails were buckled, and both engines turned over.

"But how was it they didn't hear the engines coming?"

"The tractor engine was making such a din."

"What about the bodies?"

"They won't let anybody in. They've roped them off."

"What was that somebody was telling me about the express?"

The nine o'clock express goes through our station at a good speed and on to the crossing. But the two drivers weren't hurt when their engines crashed, they jumped out and ran back along the line waving their hands and they managed to stop the train. . . . The nephew was hurt by a beam as well. He's hiding at Klavka's now so that they won't know he was at the crossing. If they find out they'll drag him in as a witness. . . . "Don't know lies up, and do know gets tied up. Kira's husband didn't get a scratch. He tried to hang himself, they had to cut him down. It's all because of me, he says, my aunty's killed and my brother. Now he's gone and given himself up. But the mad-house is where he'll be going, not prison. Oh, Matryona, my dearest Matryona. . . ."

Matryona was gone. Someone close to me had been killed. And on her last day I had scolded her for wearing my jerkin.

The lovingly-drawn red and yellow woman in the book advertisement smiled happily on.

Old Masha sat there weeping a little longer. Then she got up to go. And suddenly she asked me, "Ignatich, you remember, Matryona had a grey shawl. She meant it to go to my Tanya when she died, didn't she?"

She looked at me hopefully in the half-darkness. . . . surely I hadn't forgotten?

No, I remembered. "She said so, yes."

"Well, listen, maybe you could let me take it with me now. The family will be swarming in to-morrow and I'll never get it then." And she gave me another hopeful, imploring look. She had been Matryona's friend for half a century, the only one in the village who truly loved her.

No doubt she was right.

"Of course. . . take it."

She opened the chest, took out the shawl, tucked it under her coat and went out.

The mice had gone mad. They were running furiously up and down the walls, and you could almost see the green wallpaper rippling and rolling over their backs.

IN THE MORNING I had to go to school. The time was three o'clock. The only thing to do was to lock up and go to bed.

Lock up, because Matryona would not be coming.

I lay down, leaving the light on. The mice were squeaking, almost moaning, racing and running. My mind was weary and wandering, and I couldn't rid myself of an uneasy feeling that an invisible Matryona was flitting about and saying good-bye to her home.

And suddenly I imagined Faddei standing there, young and black-haired, in the dark patch by the door, with his axe uplifted. "If it wasn't my own brother I'd chop the both of you to bits."

The threat had lain around for forty years, like an old broad-sword in a corner, and in the end it had struck its blow.

WHEN IT WAS LIGHT the women went to the crossing and brought back all that was left of Matryona on a hand-sledge with a dirty sack over it. They threw off the sack to wash her. There was just a mess. . . . no feet, only half a body, no left hand. One woman said, "The Lord has left her her right hand. She'll be able to say her prayers where she's going. . . ."

Then the whole crowd of rubber-plants was carried out of the cottage. . . . these plants that Matryona had loved so much that once when smoke woke her up in the night she didn't rush to save her house but to tip the plants on to the floor in case they were suffocated. The women swept the floor clean. They hung a wide towel of old home-spun over Matryona's dim mirror. They took down the jolly posters. They moved my table out of the way. Under the icons, near the windows, they stood a rough unadorned coffin on a row of stools.

In the coffin lay Matryona. Her body, mangled and lifeless, was covered with a clean sheet. Her head was swathed in a white kerchief. Her face was almost undamaged, peaceful, more alive than dead.

The villagers came to pay their last respects. The women even brought their small children to take a look at the dead. And if anyone raised a lament, all the women, even those who had looked in out of idle curiosity, always joined in, wailing where they stood by the door or the wall, as though they were providing a choral accompaniment. The men stood stiff and silent with their caps off.

THE FORMAL LAMENTATION had to be performed by the women of Matryona's family. I observed that the lament followed a coldly calculated age-

old ritual. The more distant relatives went up to the coffin for a short while and made low wailing noises over it. Those who considered themselves closer kin to the dead woman began their lament in the doorway and when they got as far as the coffin, bowed down and roared out their grief right in the face of the departed. Every lamenter made up her own melody. And expressed her own thoughts and feelings.

I realised that a lament for the dead is not just a lament, but a kind of politics. Matryona's three sisters swooped, took possession of the cottage, the goat, and the stove, locked up the chest, ripped the two hundred roubles for the funeral out of the coat lining, and drummed it into everybody who came that only they were near relatives. Their lament over the coffin went like this, "*Oh nanny, nanny! Oh nan-nan!* All we had in the world was you! You could have lived in peace and quiet, you could. And we should always have been kind and loving to you. Now your top room's been the death of you. Finished you off it has, the cursed thing! Oh why did you have to take it down? Why didn't you listen to us?"

Thus the sisters' laments were indictments of Matryona's husband's family: they shouldn't have made her take the top room down. (There was an underlying meaning too: you've taken the top room all right but we won't let you have the house itself!)

Matryona's husband's family, her sisters-in-law, Yefim and Faddei's sisters, and various nieces lamented like this, "*Oh poor auntie, poor auntie!* Why didn't you take better care of yourself! Now they're angry with us for sure. Our own dear Matryona you were, and it's your own fault! The top room is nothing to do with it. Oh why did you go where death was waiting for you? Nobody asked you to go there. And what a way to die! Oh why didn't you listen to us?" (Their answer to the others showed through these laments: we are not to blame for her death, and the house we'll talk about later.)

But the "second" Matryona, a coarse, broad-faced woman, the substitute Matryona whom Faddei had married so long ago for the sake of her name, got out of step with family policy, wailing and sobbing over the coffin in her simplicity, "*Oh my poor dear sister!* You won't be angry with me, will you now? Oh-oh-oh! How we used to talk and talk, you and me! Forgive a poor miserable woman! You've gone to be with your dear mother, and you'll come for me some day for sure! Oh-oh-oh-oh! . . ."

At every "oh-oh-oh" it was as though she were giving up the ghost. She writhed and gasped, with her breast against the side of the coffin. When her lament went beyond the ritual prescription the women, as though acknowledging its success, all started saying, "come away now, come away."

Matryona came away, but back she went again, sobbing with even greater abandon. Then an ancient woman came out of a corner, put her hand on Matryona's shoulder, and said, "There are two riddles in this world: how I was born I don't remember, how I shall die I don't know."

And Matryona fell silent at once, and all the others were silent, so that there was an unbroken hush.

But the old woman herself, who was much older than all the other old women there and didn't seem to belong to Matryona at all, after a while started wailing, "Oh my poor sick Matryona! Oh my poor Vasilyevna! Oh what a weary thing it is to be seeing you into your grave!"

There was one who didn't follow the ritual, but wept straightforwardly, in the fashion of our age, which has had plenty of practice at it. This was Matryona's unfortunate foster-daughter, Kira, from Cherusti, for whom the top room had been taken down and moved. Her ringlets were pitifully out of curl. Her eyes looked red and bloodshot. She didn't notice that her headscarf was slipping off out in the frosty air and that her arm hadn't found the sleeve of her coat. She walked in a stupor from her foster-mother's coffin in one house to her brother's in another. They were afraid she would lose her mind, because her husband had to go for trial as well.

It looked as if her husband was doubly at fault: not only was he moving the top room, but as an engine-driver he knew the regulations about unprotected crossings, and should have gone down to the station to warn them about the tractor. There were a thousand people on the Urals express that night, peacefully sleeping in the upper and lower berths of their dimly-lit carriages, and all those lives were nearly cut short. All because of a few greedy people, wanting to get their hands on a plot of land, or not wanting to make a second trip with a tractor.

All because of the top room, which had been under a curse ever since Faddei's hands had started itching to take it down.

The tractor-driver was already beyond human justice. And the railway authorities were also at

fault, both because a busy crossing was unguarded and because the coupled engines were travelling without lights. That was why they had tried at first to blame it all on the drink, and then to keep the case out of court.

The rails and the track were so twisted and torn that for three days, while the coffins were still in the house, no trains ran—they were diverted on to another line. All Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, from the end of the investigation until the funeral, the work of repairing the line went on day and night. The repair gang was frozen, and they made fires to warm themselves and to light their work at night, using the boards and beams from the second sledge which were there for the taking, scattered around the crossing.

The first sledge just stood there, undamaged and still loaded, a little way beyond the crossing.

One sledge, tantalisingly ready to be towed away, and the other perhaps still to be plucked from the flames—that was what harrowed the soul of black-bearded Faddei all day Friday and all day Saturday. His daughter was going out of her mind, his son-in-law had a criminal charge hanging over him, in his own house lay the son he had killed, and along the street the woman he had killed and whom he had once loved. But Faddei stood by the coffins clutching his beard only for a short time, and went away again. His tall brow was clouded by painful thoughts, but what he was thinking about was how to save the timbers of the top room from the flames and from Matryona's scheming sisters.

Going over the people of Talnovo in my mind I realised that Faddei was not the only one like that.

Property, the people's property, or my property, is strangely called our "goods." If you lose your goods, people think you disgrace yourself and make yourself look foolish.

Faddei dashed about, never stopping for a sit-down, from the settlement to the station, from one official to another, stood there with his bent back, leaning heavily on his stick, and begged them all to take pity on an old man and give him permission to recover the top room.

Somebody gave permission. And Faddei gathered together his surviving sons, sons-in-law and nephews, got horses from the kolkhoz and from the other side of the wrecked crossing, by a roundabout way that led through three villages, brought the remnants of the top room home to his yard. He finished the job in the early hours of Sunday morning.

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON they were buried. The two coffins met in the middle of the village, and the relatives argued about which of them should go first. Then they put them side by side on an open sledge, the aunt and the nephew, and carried the dead over the damp snow, with a gloomy February sky above, to the churchyard two villages away. There was an unkind wind, so the priest and the deacon waited inside the church and didn't come out to Talnovo to meet them.

A crowd of people walked slowly behind the coffins, singing in chorus. Outside the village they fell back.

WHEN SUNDAY CAME the women were still fussing around the house. An old woman mumbled psalms by the coffin, Matryona's sisters flitted about, popping things into the oven, and the air round the mouth of the stove trembled with the heat of red-hot peats, those which Matryona had carried in a sack from a distant bog. They were making unappetizing pies with poor flour.

When the funeral was over and it was already getting on towards evening, they gathered for the wake. Tables were put together to make a long one, which hid the place where the coffin had stood in the morning. To start with they all stood round the table, and an old man, the husband of a sister-in-law, said the Lord's prayer. Then they poured everybody a little honey and warm water, just enough to cover the bottom of the bowl. We spooned it up without bread or anything, in memory of the dead. Then we ate something and drank vodka and the conversation became more animated. Before the jelly they all stood up and sang "*Eternal remembrance*" (they explained to me that it had to be sung before the jelly). There was more drinking. By now they were talking louder than ever, and not about Matryona at all. The sister-in-law's husband started boasting, "Did you notice, brother Christians, that they took the funeral service slowly to-day? That's because Father Mikhail noticed me. He knows I know the service. Other times it's saints defend us, homeward wend us, and that's all."

At last the supper was over. They all rose again. They sang "*Worthy is she*." Then again, with a triple repetition of "*Eternal remembrance*." But the voices were hoarse and out of tune, their faces drunken, and nobody put any feeling into this "eternal memory."

Then the main guests went away, and only the near relatives were left. They pulled out

their cigarettes and lit up, there were jokes and laughter. There was some mention of Matryona's husband and his disappearance. The sister-in-law's husband, striking himself on the chest, assured me and the cobbler who was married to one of Matryona's sisters, "He was dead, Yefim was dead! What could stop him coming back if he wasn't? If I knew they were going to hang me when I got to the old country I'd come back just the same!"

The cobbler nodded in agreement. He was a deserter and had never left the old country. All through the war he was hiding in his mother's cellar.

The stern and silent old woman who was more ancient than all the ancients was staying the night and sat high up on the stove. She looked down in mute disapproval on the indecently animated youngsters of fifty and sixty.

But the unhappy foster-daughter, who had grown up within these walls, went away behind the kitchen screen to cry.

FADDEI DIDN'T COME to Matryona's wake—perhaps because he was holding a wake for his son. But twice in the next few days he walked angrily into the house for discussions with Matryona's sisters and the deserting cobbler.

The argument was about the house. Should it go to one of the sisters or to the foster-daughter? They were on the verge of taking it to court, but they made peace because they realised that the court would hand over the house to neither side, but to the rural district council. A bargain was struck. One sister took the goat, the cobbler and his wife got the house, and to make up Faddei's share, since he had "nursed every bit of timber here in his arms," in addition to the top room which had already been carried away, they let him have the shed which had housed the goat, and the whole of the inner fence between the yard and the garden.

Once again the insatiable old man got the better of sickness and pain and became young and active. Once again he gathered together his surviving sons and sons-in-law, and they dismantled the shed and the fence, and he hauled the timbers himself, sledge by sledge, and only towards the end did he have Antoshka of 8-D, who didn't slack this time, to help him.

THEY BOARDED Matryona's house up till the spring, and I moved in with one of her sisters-in-law, not far away. This sister-in-law

on several occasions came out with some recollection of Matryona, and made me see the dead woman in a new light. "Yefim didn't love her. He used to say, 'I like to dress in an educated way, but she dresses any old way, like they do in the country.' Well then, he thinks, if she doesn't want anything, he might as well drink whatever's to spare. One time I went with him to the town to work, and he got himself a madam there and never wanted to come back to Matryona."

Everything she said about Matryona was disapproving. She was slovenly, she made no effort to get a few things about her. She wasn't the saving kind. She didn't even keep a pig, because she didn't like fattening them up for some reason. And the silly woman helped other people without payment. (What brought Matryona to mind this time was that the garden needed ploughing and she couldn't find enough helpers to pull the plough.)

Matryona's sister-in-law admitted that she was warm-hearted and straightforward, but pitied and despised her for it.

It was only then, after these disapproving comments from her sister-in-law, that a true likeness of Matryona formed itself before my eyes, and I understood her as I never had when I lived side by side with her.

Of course! Every house in the village kept a pig. But she didn't. What can be easier than fattening a greedy piglet that cares for nothing in the world but food! You warm his swill three times a day, you live for him—then you cut his throat and you have some fat.

But she had none. . . .

She made no effort to get things round her. . . . She didn't struggle and strain to buy things and then care for them more than life itself.

She didn't go all out after fine clothes. Clothes, that beautify what is ugly and evil.

She was misunderstood and abandoned even by her husband. She had lost six children, but not her sociable ways. She was a stranger to her sisters and sisters-in-law, a ridiculous creature who stupidly worked for others without pay. She didn't accumulate property against the day she died. A dirty-white goat, a gammy-legged cat, some rubber plants. . . .

We had all lived side by side with her and never understood that she was that righteous one without whom, as the proverb says, no village can stand.

Nor any city.

Nor our whole land.

Vernon Watkins

Deposition

(on the painting by Ceri Richards)

No longer the gamblers
With dice entreat
These giant, dilated
Hands and feet.
Love has for triumph
Its own defeat.

Take down the litter
Of night and air.
The letters of life
Are written there
In the last constriction
Made fast by prayer.

Those letters of life
To the white sheet toss
In the moment of Godhead's

Utmost loss.
Swift, clasped fingers
Complete the Cross.

The will of the hand
Like an anchor weighs
All time's succession
In terms of praise.
The face transfigured
Imprinted stays.

In the eye of the world
Resurrection fails.
On the curve of the world
Speculation sails.
One reaches the clasp
For the bag of nails.



Ceri Richards C2

ART

The Premises of Action Painting

By Harold Rosenberg

"In Greece philosophising was a mode of action."

KIERKEGAARD

ACTION PAINTING solved no problems. On the contrary, at its best it remained faithful to the conviction in which it had originated that the worst thing about the continuing crisis of art and society were the proposals for solving it. In the thirties art had become *active*, having gratefully accepted from politics an assignment in changing the world. Its role was to participate in "the education of the masses." Painting and sculpture were to overcome at last their Bohemian isolation and gain an audience of non-sophisticated folk in the classical manner. An enticing outlook—except that practice was to disclose that to educate the masses the educator must himself take on the essential characteristic of the masses, their anonymity. For a contemporary mind no prospect holds a deeper dread. The rationalising art of the social message found itself shuffling feebly between the ideal of the action-inspiring poster and the ideal of personal style.

The War and the collapse of the Left dissolved the drama of The Final Conflict—the only kind, whether in religion, love, or politics, for which the conflicts of creation may be put aside. The crisis was to have no closing date and had to be accepted as the condition of the era. If it ever did end, nothing would be left as it was now. Thus art consisted only of the will to paint and the memory of paintings, and society of the man who stood in front of the canvas.

The achievement of Action Painting lay in stating the issue with creative force. Art had acquired the habit of *doing* (a decade ago it was still normal for leaders of the new art to stage a demonstration in New York on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum). Only the blank canvas, however, offered the opportunity for a doing that would not be seized upon in mid-motion by the depersonalising machine of capitalist society, or by the depersonalising machine of the world-wide opposition to that society. The American painter found a new function for art as the action that belonged to himself.

THE ARTIST'S STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY took hold of the crisis directly, without ideological mediation. In thus engaging art in the life of the times *as the life of the artist*, American Action Painting gave expression to a universal wish. Where else but in this crisis would any living individual ever live? Throughout the world, works from New York reached to individuals within the mass as possibilities for each. Paintings produced painters—a development greeted with jeers by shallow minds. Painting became the means of confronting in daily practice the problematic nature of modern individuality. Action Painting restored metaphysical point to art.

There was not in Action Painting as in earlier art movements a stated vanguard concept, but there were the traditional assumptions of a vanguard. Devoid of radical subject matter—except for occasional echoes of prisons, the Spanish Civil War, Pennsylvania coal towns, in the titles of paintings and sculptures—Action Painting never doubted the radicalism of its intentions or its substance. Certain ruptures were taken for granted. Foremost among these was the rupture between the artist and the middle class. Commercialism, careerism, were spoken of disdainfully as a matter of course. If the struggle against conventional values had been shifted inward, from, say, group manifestos to dialogues between husbands and wives, the self-segregation of the artist from the "community" was still the rule. Indeed, the first gesture of the new painting had been to disengage itself from the crumbling Liberal-Left which had supplied the intellectual environment of the preceding generation of artists.

THE REJECTION OF SOCIETY remained unexpressed. This may have deprived Action Painting of a certain moral coherence and reduced its capacity to resist dilution. Its silence on social matters is not, however, decisive either as to its meaning or its public status. Anti-social motifs in art are of doubtful consequence—society calmly

takes them in its stride and extends its rewards to the rebels who painted them. This has been the case with Dada, Expressionism, Surrealism, even Social Realism. To explain the success of Action Painting as the pay-off for an opportunistic turning away from the issues of the day requires a blend of malice and ignorance. A rich Action Painter stoically enduring the crisis of society in his imported sports car makes a good comical stereotype—no serious idea is without its Coney Island underside—but the loudest guffaws come from materialistic cynics for whom high sales prices decide everything.

ANOTHER VANGUARD assumption was taken up by Action Painting with full intensity—that which demanded the demolition of existing values in art. The revolutionary phrase “doing away with” was heard with the frequency and authority of a slogan. The elimination of subject matter was carried out in a series of moves—then came doing away with drawing, composition, colour, texture; later, with the flat surface, art materials. (Somewhere along the line Action Painting itself was eliminated.) In a fervour of subtraction art was taken apart element by element and the parts thrown away. As with diamond cutters, knowing where to make the split was the primary insight.

Each step in the dismantling widened the area in which the artist could set in motion his critical-creative processes, the irreducible human residue in a situation where all superstructures are shaky. It had become appropriate to speak of the canvas as an arena (at length the canvas was put aside to produce “happenings”).

On the “white expanse” a succession of champions performed feats of negation for the liberation of all. “Jackson broke the ice for us,” de Kooning has generously said of Pollock. It is possible to paraphrase Lady Macbeth, not to stand on this order of the breaking. Be that as it may, behind Pollock came a veritable flotilla of icebreakers. As art dwindled the freedom of the artist increased, and with it the insignificance of gestures of merely formal revolt. Content became everything.

Action Painting also pressed to the limit the break with national and regional traditions which, by an historical irony, the political internationalism of the '30s had strengthened. As noted above, the crisis-nature of Action Painting made it the vocabulary of aesthetic disaffection wherever experimental art was not barred by force.

TO FORGET THE CRISIS, individual, social, aesthetic, that brought Action Painting into being, or to bury it out of sight (it cannot really

be forgotten), is to distort fantastically the reality of post-war American art. This distortion is being practised daily by all who have an interest in “normalising” vanguard art, so that they may enjoy its fruits in comfort: these include dealers, collectors, educators, directors of government cultural programmes, art historians, museum officials, critics, artists—in sum, the “art world.”

The root theory of the distortion is the academic concept of art as art—whatever the situation or state of the artist, the only thing that “counts” is the painting and the painting itself counts only as line, colour, form. How “responsible” it seems to the young academician, or to the old salesman, to think of painting as painting, rather than as politics, sociology, psychology, metaphysics. No doubt bad sociology and bad psychology are bad and have nothing to do with art, as they have nothing to do with social or psychic fact. And about any painting it is true, as Franz Kline once said, that it was painted with paint. But the net effect of deleting from art the artist's situation, his conclusions about it and his enactment of it in his work is to substitute for the crisis-dynamics of contemporary painting and sculpture an arid professionalism that is a caricature of the aestheticism of half a century ago. The history of radical confrontation, impasse, purging, is soaked up into paeans about technical variations on pre-Depression schools and masters. The chasm between art and society is bridged by official contacts with artists and by adult-education and public relations programmes. Artificial analogies are drawn between features of Action Painting and prestigious cultural enterprises, such as experiments in atomic laboratories, space exploration, skyscraper architecture, new design, existential theology, psychotherapy. An art that had radically detached itself from social objectives is recaptured as a social resource. In turn society is deprived of the self-awareness made possible by this major focus of imaginative discontent.

AS SILENCING THE UNEASY consciousness of contemporary painting and sculpture falsifies the relation between art and society, it also inverts the relation between the artist and art. The exclusion of subject matter and the reduction to the vanishing point of traditional aesthetic elements are conceived not as effects of the loss by art of its social functions, on the one hand, and of the artist's sentiment of distance from the art of the past, on the other, but as a victorious climb up a ladder of technical transcendence. The tension of the painter's lonely and perilous balance on the rim of absurdity is

dissolved into the popular melodrama of technical breakthrough, comparable to the invention of the transistor. Sophistries of stylistic comparison establish shallow amalgams which incorporate contemporary art into the sum total of the art of the centuries. By transferring attention from the artist's statement to the inherited vocabulary, modern works are legitimised as art to the degree that they are robbed of sense. The longing which Eisenhower recently expressed for art that did not remind him of contemporary life is shared by the functionaries of the art world, who, however, are prepared to project into another realm any work regardless of its date. The will to naturalise contemporary painting and sculpture into the domain of art-as-art favours the "expert" who purveys to the bewildered.

"I fail to see anything essential in it [the new abstract art]," writes Clement Greenberg, an advisor on masterpieces, current and future, "that cannot be shown to have evolved [presumably through the germ cells in the paint] out of either Cubism or Impressionism, just as I fail to see anything essential in Cubism or Impressionism whose development could not be traced back to Giotto and Masaccio and Giorgione and Titian."

In this burlesque of art history, artists vanish, and paintings spring from one another with no more need for substance than the critic's theories. Nothing real is "anything essential"—including, for example, the influence on Impressionism of the invention of the camera, the importation of Japanese prints, the science of optics, above all, the artist's changed attitude towards form and tradition. In regard to historical differences the critic's sole qualification is his repeated "I fail to see," while name-dropping of the masters supplies a guarantee of value beyond discussion. Yet grotesque as this is, to a collector being urged to invest in a canvas he can neither respond to nor comprehend, it must be reassur-

ing to be told that it has a pedigree only a couple of jumps from Giotto.*

ANYTHING CAN "be traced back" to anything, especially by one who has elected himself First Cause. The creator, however, has not before him a *thing*, "traceable" or otherwise—to bring one into being he must cope with the possibilities and necessities of his time as they exist within him. The content of Action Painting is the artist's drama of creation within the blind alley of an epoch that has identified its issues but allowed them to grow unmanageable. In this situation it has been the rule for creative performance to be a phase in a rhythm of confusion, misery, letting go, even self-destruction—as the formula of Thomas Mann had it, of sickness, at once moral and physical. The lives of many, perhaps a majority, of the leading Action Painters have followed this disastrous rhythm from which creation is too often inseparable. Who would suspect this inception of their work from the immaculately conceived biographies and catalogue notes, in which personalities have been "objectified" to satisfy the prudery of next of kin and the prejudices of mass education.

The suppression of the crisis-content of Action Painting is also the basis of a counter public-relations which denounces this art as historically inconsequential and as gratuitously subversive of aesthetic and human values. The ideological assault against Action Painting reaches the same pitch on the Right and on the Left. The former refuses to acknowledge that its own standards are empty abstractions, the latter that its notions of the future have proven groundless. The fiction that the art of our time is a fulfilment of art thus finds itself at war with the fiction that our time could find a fulfilment—a conflict of echoes in a vacuum. Art criticism is probably the only remaining intellectual activity, not excluding theology, in which pre-Darwinian minds continue to affirm value systems dissociated from any observable phenomena.

THE CRISIS that brought Action Painting into being has in no wise abated. On the contrary, all indications are that it has deepened—in regard to society, the individual artist, art itself. What has changed in the past ten years is that consciousness of the crisis has been further dulled—the increasing difficulty of dealing with it has probably furthered the spirit of abandonment. With the historical situation driven underground, the will to act has weakened and the inability to do so become less disturbing. I am describing the inner reality of the much-advertised success of vanguard art.

* It took Mr. Greenberg exactly ten years to discover "art lovers [who]... have not yet really seen any kind of painting that conforms to Mr. Rosenberg's description [of Action Painting]." In the face of those who *think* about art, Mr. Greenberg habitually bellows the ancient aesthete's slogan of an "eye." Apparently however, he is reluctant to use his own—he once found *purple* in a Mondrian. Had he read with normal perception he might have spared himself his worry about the non-existence of Action Paintings. For the first sentences of "The American Action Painters" declare: "What makes any definition of a movement in art dubious is that it never fits the deepest artists in the movement—certainly not as well as, if successful, it does the others. Yet without the definition something essential is bound to be missed."

In the United States, the observation of Wallace Stevens which I quoted a decade ago at the head of "The American Action Painters," has become the final judgment of all but the tiniest handful of artists: "The American will is easily satisfied in its effort to realise itself in knowing itself."

The future of Action Painting, relieved of its original stress, is not difficult to predict. Indeed, it was already visible a decade ago, before its acquisition of a name propelled it in the direction of a Style. "The tremors produced by a few expanses of tone or by the juxtaposition of colours and shapes purposely brought to the verge of bad taste in the manner of Park Avenue shop windows are sufficient cataclysms in many of these happy overthrows of Art... Since there is nothing to be 'communicated,' a unique signature comes to seem the equivalent of a new plastic language... etc." With the crisis-sentiment displaced by the joys of professionalism, it remained only to make labels of Anguish and Spontaneity. I do not wish to infer, of course, that artists have any greater obligation to be troubled or in doubt than other people.

THE IDEA OF THIS "trans-formal" art was never a simple one, nor would it be wise, as is often proposed, to attempt a very close description of it. An action that eventuates on a canvas, rather than in the physical world or in society, is inherently ambiguous. As Thomas Hess has mentioned, art history lies in wait for the Action Painting at its beginning, its middle and its end (what lies in wait for art history?). To come into being such a painting draws on the methods and vocabulary of existing art; in its process of production it invokes, positively and negatively, choices and references of painting; upon completion it is prized within the category of painting values and "hangs on the wall." In sum its being a work of art contradicts its being an action.

To literal minds the presence of a contradiction invalidates either the description or the

object described. Yet it is precisely its contradictions, shared with other forms of action (since all action takes place in a context by which its purpose may be reversed) that make Action Painting appropriate to the epoch of crisis. It retains its vigour only so long as it supports its dilemmas: if it slips over into action ("life") there is no painting; if it is satisfied with itself as painting it turns into "apocalyptic wallpaper."

I HAVE SAID that Action Painting transferred into the artist's self the crisis of society and of art. It was its subjectivity that related it to the art of the past, most immediately to that of another desperate decade, the Germany of the 'twenties, from which it drew a misnomer, "Expressionism."

There is also a non-subjective way of reacting to a crisis—perhaps this way belongs to a later phase in which hope and will have been put aside. I refer to the impassive reflection of the absurdities which become the accepted realities of daily life, as well as the emblems of its disorder. The projection of these absurdities according to their own logic produces an art of impenetrable farce—farce being the final form, as Marx noted in one of his Hegelian moments, of a situation that has become untenable. It is thus that I interpret the current revival of illusionism in art through techniques of physical incorporation of street debris and the wooden-faced mimicry of senseless items of mass communication. Here again, however, the crisis-content of the work is already being camouflaged in how-to-do-it interpretations which amalgamate the new slapstick art with an earlier aesthetic of found materials.

In that it dared to be subjective, to affirm the artist as an active self, Action Painting is the last serious "moment" in art. The painters in this current have kept the human being intact as the ultimate subject of painting. All art movements are movements towards mediocrity for those who are content to ride them. The premises of Action Painting, however, are still valid.

Six Poems by Jorge Luis Borges

Matthew XXV, 30

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The first bridge on Constitución. At my feet
the shunting trains trace iron labyrinths.
Steam hisses up and up into the night
which becomes, at a stroke, the Night of the Last Judgment.

From the unseen horizon,
and from the very centre of my being,
an infinite voice pronounced these things—
things, not words. This is my feeble translation,
time-bound, of what was a single limitless Word:

“Stars, bread, libraries of East and West,
playing cards, chessboards, galleries, skylights, cellars,
a human body to walk with on the earth,
fingernails, growing at night-time and in death,
shadows for forgetting, mirrors which endlessly multiply,
falls in music, gentlest of all time’s shapes,
borders of Brazil, Uruguay, horses and mornings,
a bronze weight, a copy of Grettir Saga,
algebra and fire, the charge at Junín in your blood,
days more crowded than Balzac, scent of the honeysuckle,
love, and the imminence of love, and intolerable remembering,
dreams like buried treasure, generous luck,
and memory itself, where a glance can make men dizzy—
all this was given to you and, with it,
the ancient nourishment of heroes—
treachery, defeat, humiliation.
In vain have oceans been squandered on you, in vain
the sun, wonderfully seen through Whitman’s eyes.
You have used up the years and they have used up you,
and still, and still, you have not written the poem.”

translated by Alastair Reid

A Compass

Everything becomes a word in a language
in which Something or Someone, day and night,
goes on writing that infinite gibberish,
the history of the world. In its rush,
everything passes, Rome, Carthage, it, you, I,
my life, which I do not understand, this agony
in being enigma, accident, and puzzle,
and all the wild disharmony of Babel.
Yet something unnameable stirs beyond the name.
Today I have felt its curious presence, quivering
in this blue needle which lightly, airily,
wavers toward the limits of the sea,
recalling the face of a clock glimpsed in a dream,
suggesting a bird, asleep and faintly moving.

translated by Alastair Reid

My Entire Life

Here once again, with my lips memory-laden, unique
and yet similar to you.
I am that torpid intensity which is a soul.
I have persisted in the approach to joy
and the favouring of pain.
I have crossed the sea.
I have practised many lands; I have seen a woman
and two or three men.
I have loved a white and haughty girl
of Hispanic quietude.
I have seen an infinite suburb where an
insatiable immortality of sunsets are accomplished.
I have seen some fields where the raw flesh
of a guitar was painful.
I have savoured numerous words.
I deeply believe that that is all and that I will
neither see nor do anything new.
I believe that my days and my nights are equal
in poverty and richness to those of God and those
of all men.

translated by Anthony Kerrigan

Houses like Angels

Where San Juan and Chacabuco meet
I saw the blue houses,
houses the colour of adventure.
They were like flags
and deep as dawn in the suburbs.
Some are the colour of daybreak, others the colour of dusk;
their radiance is a passion in the face of the eight sides
of any corner, turbid and lax.
I think of the women
looking up at the sky from their fervent patios.
I think of the clear arms that will decorate the evening
and of the blackness of braids: I think of the grave joy
of looking at oneself in their eyes, dark as grape arbours.
The pain that turns the corner blue
is altogether haughty.
I will push back the screen made of iron and patio
and find a clear girl, already my sweetheart, in the hall
and the two of us will fall still, trembling like flame,
and immediate joy will pale into past.

translated by Anthony Kerrigan

A Key in Salonica

Abarbanel, Farías or Pinedo
Expelled from Spain by impiety
and cant, keep in perpetuity
The key to their house in Toledo.

Free now from hope or fear,
They study the key at close of day;
The bronze winks yesteryears, the faraway,
Weary with glowing, still and drear.

Now that their door is dust, the pin
Is cipher to the Diaspora and the wind,
And is like that key to the Temple

Which a hero hurled at the blue, as the Imperial
Attacked and havoc wrought,
And which a hand in heaven caught.

translated by Anthony Kerrigan

The Card-Trick

Fifty-two cards have taken the place of life.
Fifty-two amulets of painted cardboard
have gently conspired to replace
the great primordial reality
of sufferings and pleasures of the flesh,
and this smiling new creation
goes to work peopling the stolen time
with all the dazzling primitive deceptions
of its tyrannical mythology.

Along the edges of the card-table,
life stops short. Within is another country—
all the excitement of bidding and of wishing,
the ace of spades, powerful as Don Juan Manuel,
the seven of diamonds jingling our hopes.
A lazy slowness settles on all talk,
old words go slithering down the well-known slopes
and, like the ups and downs of the game itself,
are everlastingly the same. The players
in the immediate fever of the moment
take some unlikely tricks—an accomplishment
which lends a touch of immortality
(though scarcely more than a touch)
to all their dead companions in the silence.

translated by Alastair Reid

NOTES & TOPICS

The Eclipse of Distance

IS OUR technical civilisation only a revolution in production (and in consumption, transportation, communication)? Is it not necessarily a revolution in sensibility as well? Lucien Febvre once pointed out that the age of Rabelais had little visual sense, and that the metaphors of the poets were those of touch and smell but not of sight. One can, in the same spirit, seek to indicate the distinctive elements of the contemporary sensibility. If I can try to capture it in a phrase, it would be that contemporary culture is characterised by an "eclipse of distance." Necessarily, my exposition here has to be schematic (and equally dogmatic, given the problems of space—although in the 19th century, the great intellectual reviews, such as the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Westminster Review*, would print essays of sixty and eighty and a hundred pages; but then printing costs were cheaper and intellectuals had more leisure); I can only touch briefly on some of the points I would like to make.

EVERY CULTURE "hangs together" in some fashion, and this we call its style. A religious culture has a greater unity than most for all the elements of the culture are directed toward some common end: to emphasise mystery, to create awe, to exalt, to transcend. The unity, emphasised in mood, runs like a thread through its architecture, its music, its painting, and its literature—in its spires, its liturgies, litanies, spatial representation of figures, and sacred text. Secular cultures rarely have this conscious design. Yet they, too, have a common style, expressed in rhythms and in moods. And these are equally translated into techniques which are responses to underlying elements in the civilisation that are felt, but not often consciously expressed. Such elements pervade all aspects of a culture, even though they are expressed in varied ways. It is usual among contemporary critics to contrast high culture (or serious culture) with mass culture (entertainment culture) and to see the latter as a perversion or de-naturing of the former. But both are part of a *common* culture, and in some way they must express common underlying rhythms or moods of the technical civilisation.

I believe that the *common elements* lie in the effects which culture (the expressive symbolisation of experience) seeks to produce, and in contemporary society these effects I would identify

as *novelty, sensation, simultaneity, immediacy, and impact.*

The intention of leisure class culture was *contemplation*—to establish a distance between a spectator and an experience, essentially because the experience itself was new and one needed time and space to absorb it. The introduction of social mobility gave rise to the "novel" as a literary form (it was "fiction" which also means an *as if*, a "spurious" sense of knowing about something strange), but one read *about* something, one was not *in* it.

In contemporary modes, we know something through action and consequence, not through contemplation and reason. But it is not, actually, on the philosophical level that the revolution in sensibility transforms perception, but in the emergence of a distinctively new aspect of the mass society.

It is in Durkheim, perhaps, that we can seek the clue to what is distinctive about the mass society. In *The Division of Labour*, Emile Durkheim pointed out that numbers alone do not create a mass society. Czarist Russia and Imperial China were large land-mass societies, with huge numbers of persons. But these societies were essentially segmented, each village simply recapitulating the features of the other. It is when the segmentation breaks down, and people come into *interaction* with each other that new social forms emerge—where ensuing competition leads not necessarily to conflict but to more complex divisions of labour, of complementary relationships, and of increased structural differentiation. What is distinctive about contemporary society then is not simply its size and numbers, but the increased interaction—*physical*, through travel, through larger work units, through larger housing densities, and *psychic*, through the mass media.

It is the increased interaction in society which leads to the syncretism of culture, and to the desire for novelty, for sensation, and the like. As Malraux long ago pointed out, the entire world is now a museum in which the treasures of Assyria and Oceania can mingle with the art of Lascaux and the Yoruba. But more, it is the increased interaction, multiplied by air travel, telephone, radio, television, and the like, which creates these rhythms that underlie the entire culture.

OF THE MANY DIFFERENT streams through which this new style develops, let me take painting as one to illustrate the hypothesis. The painting of the Renaissance, say the painting of Uccello, was "rational" in that it applied not only formal mathematical principles but equally sought to translate the rational cosmology of the Greek conception (of foreground and background, of

beginning and middle and end), the specific cosmology of space as depth and time as sequence, into art. Alberti considered a painting as a window through which to look at the visible world. This was the basis of the contemplative element and of the distance between the spectator and the experience.

Modern painting has a completely different conception. It seeks to "thrust itself" on the viewer, to establish itself immediately by impact; one must feel it as sensation and be caught by that emotion. And its very techniques emphasise that intention. In the paintings of Munch, the "internal distance" of the painting is shortened so that, as in the picture of the young girl sitting at the edge of the bed, there is little distinction between foreground and background, and the picture "leaps up" at one. In the paintings of Vuillard, the patterning on the dresses of the figures repeats the patternings of the paper on the wall so that figure and ground almost merge as one. It was Maurice Denis who established the credo of the new spirit by saying: "We must close the shutters." A painting was not to be an illusion of depth, of three dimensions in two, but a pure surface in which the element of immediacy is dominant.

These intentions—of novelty, sensation, simultaneity, immediacy, and impact—run through the mass culture (where its effects and techniques are so obvious as not to need explication) and through the serious culture as well. Yet both are common responses—albeit with different effects and consequences—to the underlying elements, the increased interactions of the technical civilisation.

The consequences of all this is to produce an "eclipse of distance"—of psychic distance, social distance, and aesthetic distance—between the speaker and an experience. A person is "caught up" in the object and is enveloped. (The American painter Mark Rothko, who has produced the extraordinary large canvases which are monochromes ten feet by twelve feet, recommended that one should view these from eighteen inches away.)

The loss of psychic distance means the suspension of time. Freud has said that in the unconscious there is no sense of time: one experiences the events of the past not *as if* it were of the present, but actually in the present; which is why the unconscious, with the storehouse of the past, especially childhood terrors, remains so threatening and has to be held down. The meaning of maturity for Freud was the ability to interpose a sense of time in events, to realise that what was of the past is in the past. But

the thrust of modern culture is to disrupt or break up time. (In Faulkner's novel, such as *The Sound and the Fury*, one begins *in medias res*. Someone is talking, we do not know who; only gradually do we realise that it is an idiot child and that Benjy, the boy, is also the name of another character. The novels of Butor are novels of surface; they reject formal memory and simply become phenomenological descriptions of objects.*) The rhythms of poetry—and one can see this in the French symbolists as well as in Gerard Manley Hopkins—have to be caught immediately, or not at all.

The break-up of social distance is the invasion of privacy, the increasing inability in contemporary society to define and maintain formal relations where desirable, to escape a crowd, or often, to define one's own tasks and work.

The disruption of aesthetic distance means that one has lost the control over the experience—the ability to step back and conduct one's own "dialogue" with the art. Perhaps the starkest illustration of this is in the innovation of the cinema. There the event, the distance (close-up or long shot), the duration of the "clip," the concentration on one character or another—the entire pace—is "imposed" upon one, as one sits enveloped (and this becomes almost literally the case in the theatre of "Cinerama" or the cinema of Abel Gance) in the darkness of the movie house. And the influence of cinematic technique has become so pervasive—the rapid cutting, the flashback, interweaving of themes and break-up of sequence—as to overwhelm, almost, the novel as well.

AT ROOT, WHAT THIS MEANS is the overturning of the "rational cosmology"—the orderly sequence of time, of beginning and middle and end, and the "internal distance" of space, of foreground and background, of figure and ground—which shaped Western thought from the 15th century, and the creations of new conception of time and space as experiences. One sees the break-up of temporal sequence even in music—in random music, John Cage, clang patterns—the introduction of random or "spontaneous" elements in cinema (as in *A Bout de Souffle*, and more in the emphasis on immediacy in the "new American cinema"—the films of Stan Brakhage, John Cassavetes, and Jonas Mekas), and the "orientalisation" of painting in the notion of "endless space." One finds even a different conception of the "duration" of art. Tchelitchev once complained that the paintings of Picasso would not last more than fifty years because of the quality of the canvas, and Picasso shrugged. One sees art as self-destruction, as in the machines of Tinguely, or as "instantaneous events" as in the "flash-

* See J. G. Weightman, "The Obsessive Object," *ENCOUNTER*, July 1962.

light pictures" that Picasso did for Clouzot. One even finds the American art critic Harold Rosenberg, in defining the uniqueness of American "action" painting, arguing that the value of the art lies not in the object produced, but the action of the painter in producing the canvas; and what the spectator has to learn to appreciate is not the image he sees but the suggestion of kinesthetic activity behind it. And the newest American "paintings" erase all boundaries between the arts by presenting them as "happenings" or as "environments." In effect, we have reached the end of a long evolution, in which the rebellion of 1890-1910 was the watershed, in which linearity and temporality—in literature, painting, even in music—have been displaced as the controlling principles in aesthetic construction.

I HAVE TRIED HERE to outline an argument, and I hope that the scanty illustrations have come back to my starting point: that the elements of *interaction* and *novelty* and similar considerations which have often been singled out as distinctive of our technical civilisation becomes transformed in sensibility into a new style. It is a style of the "eclipse of distance."

Daniel Bell

Letter from Latin America

"SO THIS is what the American Colonial empire is like." That's the almost inevitable reaction of an Englishman who, like myself, visits Latin America for the first time. There is so much that is so reminiscent of the British impact on its own colonial territories—in this case the big shops and the goods are from the United States not the United Kingdom; the news is filtered through U.P.I. rather than Reuters; the best modern buildings echo Chicago rather than Birmingham; the Fords are Thunderbirds not Consuls. And behind the façade, under the cracked veneer, the peasants scratching the ground are Amerindians, not Indians.

At first I could not help feeling that all this provided me with wonderful material for answering American criticism of the British Empire (at least it would be a change from "and-what-about-your-Negroes-in-the-South"), but later reflection made me realise that it is at least as remarkable what America has done as what it has failed to do. In Brazil, for instance, while it is true that the North East is as primitive as Ghana's Northern Territories, in Rio and Sao

Paulo "take-off" has been achieved, and there exists an affluent, inegalitarian society far more industrially advanced than anything we have to show in "British" Africa or Asia.

Yet the resentment against the Big Brother to the north remains far more virulent than anything I have run across in ex-British territories. Partly this is because the United States is a bigger brother, more powerful and overwhelming than Britain has been for 30 years, but a far more important factor is that since the United States has never exercised legal sovereignty over South America, the sub-continent has never had the therapeutic shock of gaining independence of Washington. As a result Uncle Sam appears as a formidable figure on the horizon, unrelenting, unchanging from the days of Teddy Roosevelt onwards. It is rather as if Indians were still blaming Mr. Macmillan for Amritsar or the imprisonment of Gandhi, instead of regarding such episodes, as they do, as part of the past separated from the present by Independence.

It is rather childish to cluck (or gloat) over the U.S. failure to solve all the problems of Latin America, for the fact remains that the failure is a dangerous source of tension in the world today. Cuba could be repeated, and there is no proof that either of the great world antagonists would be able twice to deal sensibly with such a situation. What can be done to stop the gadarene rush towards the brink?

First of all it is necessary to get a clear idea of what is the nature of the problem that faces *us* (not only the United States but also its allies are inevitably involved). It is quite clear that Castro is not a popular hero in Latin America, and if the Cuban situation repeats itself it will not be because Fidelismo seems a successful economic creed. On the whole Castro is believed by most Latin Americans to have made a hash of Cuba's economy, and to have sold his birthright of independence to the Russians. It is true that he is popular for having stood up to Washington, and his victory at the Bay of Pigs was softly but warmly applauded throughout the sub-continent. But since then the refugees from Cuba, especially those who at first fought on Castro's side, have made their impact by denouncing Fidel's treachery in "bringing in the Russians," and thus upsetting the balance of the New World by dragging in the Old.

Castro is not all that popular, Cuba is not all that admired even on the Left, but a revolutionary situation exists in Latin America as it would if Batista still ruled Cuba or Castro had never been born. It is caused by the frustration of having begun the process of development but not being able to complete it—this is the real revolution of rising expectations.

The expectations of Latin America are that

they will become like the United States—an “affluent society” with bulging automobiles for every peasant; and that they will achieve this by what they believe to be the North American method of “laissez-faire.” It seems very unlikely that these expectations will ever be fulfilled; certainly at the moment what has happened is that all the aid and investment of the past decade has been channelled by laissez-faire methods into producing a wealthy class (surprisingly large) and leaving the poverty of the majority almost untouched. Nowhere in the post-war world have I seen so clear a distinction between the “Two Nations” as in Rio with the shanty towns dribbling down the mountains into the heart of the modern skyscraper apartment-house areas.

The Kennedy Administration is fully aware of all this—some of the brightest new frontiersmen have become Ambassadors in Latin America. Indeed the Alliance for Progress is specifically designed to close the gaps by land reform, social reform, and tax reform. But the Alliance for Progress, which looks like a model plan for politico-economic development, has simply not begun to get off the ground. Why is virtue thus unrewarded?

IT IS EASY TO BLAME it all on the United States (as the Latin Americans do, just as Africans blame their troubles on the “neo-colonialists”), but it is neither fair nor very useful so to do. What the failure—so far—of the Alliance proves is that “to develop” is a reflexive verb. No rich country can “develop” a poor one; only the will of the people in the poor country can do that, though they may need help from the rich in the process.

What is lacking in much of Latin America is the effective will to develop—to change the old system and break up many existing profitable arrangements, in order to speed up economic growth, and to spread the wealth more widely. The trouble is that there are a lot of people in Latin America who have never-had-it-so-good; they do not see anything very urgent about changing the situation, which on the whole they control. The question is whether Washington can stampede them into change before Moscow-Havana mobilises the discontent of the other half of their nations into violent revolution.

At the moment Washington is certainly cast in the role of the Tortoise playing opposite a Red Hare. Though the terms of the Alliance call for “national plans for development” only three have been submitted so far, none of them very adequate. The declaration of Punta del Este which launched the Alliance also stressed the need for land reform (dispossessing the absentee

landlords) and tax reforms (making the rich pay), but there are few, if any, signs that any Government is doing anything about either. Finally the U.S. made it clear from the beginning that the vast sums of aid it was prepared to produce (\$20 billion over 20 years) would only be given to reasonably democratic Governments, yet the attempt to discipline the Peruvian military junta which upset the results of a democratic election, only resulted in a humiliating diplomatic rebuff. Since then Argentina has also snuffed out the embers of democracy which were beginning to glow, and substituted military rule. Democracy is very rare in Latin America.

In the face of military obscurantism, political corruption, and social injustice, the Castro régime for all its disadvantages takes on the glamour of a régime which does at least try to change the system. Cuba’s economics may be bad, but at least there has been some land reform; her politics may not be democratic but at least there is a smell of puritanism not corruption about them. “Perhaps,” say some reluctant revolutionaries, “we have to go through the Castro stage to get anything done...”

This is a counsel of despair, to which however even North Americans are prone. The difficulty is this: Latin Americans can only make progress if there is a socio-political revolution and the United States has yet to relearn the art (hardly practised for a century and a half) of instigating progressive revolutions in other people’s countries. Her task is made all the harder by her past, and by the image of Uncle Sam that exists throughout Latin America. For instance when Washington made its overt attempt to rally democratic forces against the Peruvian military, the Junta had no difficulty in crying “Yanqui interference” and rallying most of the nation behind them. North American interest and interference are deeply suspect; even her aid is widely regarded as nothing but a bribe to turn away from Castro.

The naked use of American power in blockading Cuba will have served as a reminder of the United States’ overriding strategic interests in the area. This is bound to increase the suspicion of American motives in giving aid, and may well have made the achievement of the social and political goals of the Alliance impossible just because it is the United States which is pressing for them.

The blockade has made certain what was probable before: that the Old World will have to be brought in to redress the balance of the New. Latin America cannot remain a United States preserve if it is to be maintained as part of the Free World. Is it worth our while to try and thus maintain it?

WITH ALL THE GLOOMY forebodings that I had in travelling around Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, I could not fail to realise the tremendous potentialities of the area. Brazil, for instance, will almost certainly be one of the great economic factors in the world during this century; a small state like Colombia has viable plans for development that would make her a sort of Sweden or Switzerland in 25 years. In the whole two-thirds of the world which is in the process of development two or three of the first economies to break through the poverty barrier are likely to be in Latin America.

South America matters; not only to the United States but to the world; it would be a disaster for all of us if it were lost to the Free World, quite apart from the strategic dangers this would involve. What then can be done by us, if we shake ourselves out of the habit of thinking that South America is a United States preserve?

It is impossible not to be struck by the amount of good will there is towards Britain in the sub-continent; even six months after the event the Duke of Edinburgh's tour was still a golden memory, treasured as a sign that Britain had not forgotten Latin America and intended to return to the major role it played until the Second World War. To some extent this good will is just because we are not North Americans, not, so to speak, the ex-colonial power. I could not help reflecting that in an ideal world the United States would take over all European responsibility in Africa in return for Europe taking over in Latin America!

WHAT IS CERTAINLY desirable, and possible, is that we in Britain and the European countries should start playing a larger and far more publicised role in helping South America through her difficult period of development. Help from non-United States sources will be less suspect, and Washington, which is not unaware of the penalties of power, would certainly welcome not only sharing the cash but also the credit. There have already been soundings to see if some European countries will actually join the Alliance for Progress as a gesture (if the legalities of the Treaty permit it), and Germany has indicated that she is interested.

There is a natural reluctance in Britain to take on any more commitments for overseas aid, but there are very good reasons for seeing this as an opportunity rather than an obligation. We cannot pretend to be indifferent to the fate of the area, for we have two economically awkward colonies in South America (British Honduras and Guiana) and two of our newest Common-

wealth members (Jamaica and Trinidad) are trying to enter the Organisation of American States and probably the Alliance for Progress. Nor can we easily brush aside American pressure on us to participate in their aid schemes, considering that the United States supplies more than half the aid to the British Commonwealth.

This American pressure to join in a broad multilateral plan for helping development gives us the opportunity to try and put the Western Aid Programme on a sensible basis. At present each of the richer nations is concentrating its attention on the areas where it used to have most power—Britain and France on their ex-colonies, now the United States on its southern neighbours. Initially in each case the cry of "neo-colonialism" is raised, even if the ex-colonies' economic necessities tend to mute it. What is wanted is a joint approach by the major donors, and mutual association with the recipients. The Colombo Plan and the Alliance for Progress contain a number of good ideas which could be used as the basis for constructing a world-wide system for co-operation in economic and social development. The United States' growing realisation that it cannot for economic reasons carry as much of the aid burden as it has, and for political reasons cannot manage its own neighbourhood single-handed, combine to make Washington receptive to the idea of such a world-wide organisation.

What is needed is a gesture by Britain to indicate our support for the United States' constructive policies in Latin America (which may also help to soothe the soreness felt at our early lack of support for their military policy towards Cuba). Such a gesture lies to hand in the coincidence that Latin America to-day is crying out for people with experience in tropical agriculture, irrigation, communications in sparsely populated areas, administration in illiterate communities, while Britain is trying to find jobs for the hundreds, even thousands of people with just such skills who are pouring back from our ex-colonies in Africa. A determined attempt to recruit a number of these people and to allow them to continue to pursue their chosen career, but in South America, could help the Latins and impress the North Americans.

I put the question to one rather Left-Wing President of an Andean Republic: "Would there be prejudice against such people on the grounds of their colonialist past?" He replied with a sweeping gesture of dismissal "Never, never! There is only one colonialism we fear in South America." But he didn't say which it was.

William Clark

A Talk with John Piper



WHEN I first knew John Piper, in the 'thirties, he was one of several painters (Ben Nicholson was another) who resisted the turning of Coldstream, Moynihan, Pasmore, and the Euston

Road painters towards portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. These were artists who, a bit fastidiously, pushed representation towards a frontier where it began to turn into near-abstract drizzly lines (Coldstream), pure colour (Pasmore), rich lumpiness (Moynihan). John Piper had a lean and hungry look and a lank cheek, like Caesar's idea of Cassius, and was perhaps also a bit quixotic, as though he might suddenly appear in armour. Although he supported all the virtuous left-wing causes and conscientiously attended every directors' meeting of the Group Theatre, he went on painting abstracts about the size of windmills. During the war he became a War Artist, a position for which his love of architecture, ruins, and an atmosphere of drama admirably qualified him. His paintings of burning churches and barns form, with Moore's shelter drawings, Sutherland's iron foundries, the best part of the artistic record of the war.

Before the war, as though to prepare himself for events, Piper had started doing collages of Welsh villages and landscapes. He also did the set for the Group Theatre's production of *Trial of a Judge*. After the war he established a new reputation as a topographical artist, with his series of water colours of Windsor Castle, Renishaw, and other famous houses. He continued with Welsh landscapes—pen-and-ink-scratched, with texture like that of cracks in slate, slopes of shale, enclosed in golden washes. He went on working in the theatre (doing the sets among others for *Billy Budd*) and painting abstracts. Recently he has done a whole series of oils and water colours of Venice and Rome. Piper is in fact an extremely prolific painter, branching out into many different styles and activities, but at the same time with a very marked consistency which makes a Piper, whether it is a water colour two inches by four, or a stained-glass window the size of a battleship, immediately recognisable. All the same, his work is (it seems to me) very uneven on account of the tension in his nature between the almost oriental richness of some of his water colours, and the extreme dryness which shows in many of his oils, even when they are theatrical and garish. His achievement is absolutely honourable: a fusion of a life-long search for a contemporary idiom with a passion for tradition. He is

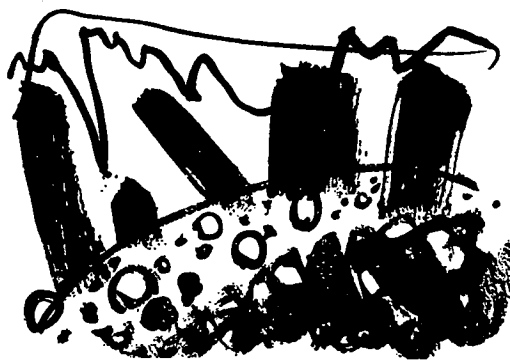
one of the few English artists whose reputation is more likely to increase than to decline.

To-day tape-recorders have had an effect on interviewing like that of photography on drawing. A printed interview appears a transcript of a tape-recording, a bad imitation of one, or a fictitious invention of the interviewer. Since I hate tapes, and anyway do not know how to use them, I will leave these notes (made in the course of a day spent at the delightful stone farmhouse in a sheltered valley near Henley, where the Pipers live) much as they were written. Some of them are taken from conversation, some of them were written for me by John Piper before I arrived. It is John Piper speaking:

THE EYE. There isn't a difference between "abstract" and "topographical" in the sense that one might consider "abstract" as pure invention, and "topographical" as imitation. The reason for this is that nothing comes out of a visual consciousness that has not already been received by the eye. All visual invention is the result of visual experience and observation. Everything is drawn out of the stock-pot of visual impressions.

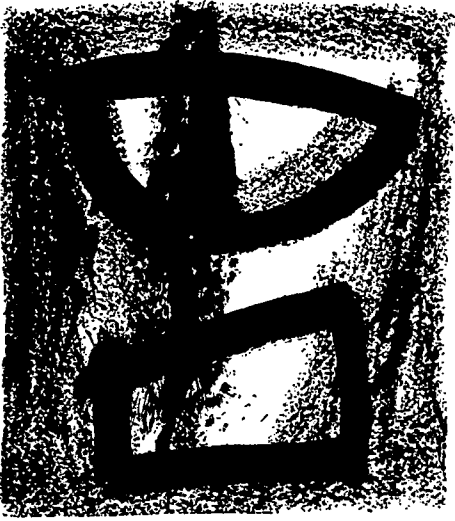
Abstraction is a way of inventing variations on the visual experiences one has had, but these may not prove enough to make a decent painter. There have been very few abstract masterpieces, apart from those by Mondrian and Rothko.

So when one looked into one's heart and asked "Where do we go from here?" one looked at one's own nature. I found I was English and Romantic, so I looked at Cotman, Turner, Blake, Palmer, and painters in that tradition and tried to draw the things I seemed born to love.



TOPOGRAPHY. Topography is a branch of Romantic art, and it is also a branch of particularisation. For Romantic art consists in seeing the wing of a bird—a tower—a hop field—and interpreting all nature through the particular.

Topography at its best is the interpretation of the world as the vision of the place. The best topographical paintings have the spirit of the



place in the time, not just the representation of the place, as Cotman expresses the atmosphere of places in Norfolk in the 19th century. Giorgione's *La Tempesta* is the epitome of every virtue topographical art should have.

PHOTOGRAPHY. Photography is useful because it makes one's vision ridiculous. It proves that what one has seen is in literal fact a cliché. I never take photographs of anything I draw, unless I think the photographs may be useful as something to react against.

ABSTRACTION. Abstraction is much more difficult for English artists than some of them realise. By habit, certainly, and probably by temperament, most English people are literary before they are visual—they have to go through some process, some ritual almost, before they see at all naturally and simply. Everything is wrapped in a known idea of itself, a concept. And then, when they do begin to see a thing directly, more or less for what it is, half the time they want to re-interpret the experience in words. Intensity! Intensity is all—but the intensity is made of something, experiences, loves, hates, fears: and the natural process for an Englishman is to explain himself in words before he sings or scribbles.

CRAFTS. Nobody can possibly have more than two or three original ideas to bring to any craft, without renewing himself by working with his own hands all by himself in the studio. The rest is tinkering, improving, tidying, untidying, and doing variations. People think that they can be original stage designers, and can go on being original indefinitely. All they're doing is turning round on the same spot and facing different ways, using the same two or three little ideas

they had when they were twenty: unless, of course, stage designing is simply another form of interior decorating, which it is often thought to be by the public and producers, and especially by music critics, who like everything beige and grey so not to interfere with the music. As for stained glass, there had not been any new ideas in that—not even little ones—for 200 years until Léger and Matisse came along (preceded by a herald or two like Miss Geddes and Miss Hone).

STAINED GLASS AND REAL PAINTING. The bogey of stained glass is its recent history, like the bogey of English painting fifty years ago. You have to steer through all the craft "traditions." But in fact the proper *rules* of the craft (as opposed to the acquired traditions) help a lot by providing an artificial discipline, so that you don't have to invent one of your own. That's the horror of crafts. In other words, the limitations of the medium itself, the craft, make half the troublesome decisions for you before you start, and set the pace, and then the craftsman, if he is a good craftsman, takes the strain of a lot more decisions—tensions—all those that have to be made from minute to minute during the work. It is a rest, really, for the designer, except for the enormous area of window he has to cover. First-class interpretative craftsmen like Patrick Reyntiens or like Charles Bravery, the scenic painters, take nearly all the strain anyway.

No, what is really difficult is to create a masterpiece on paper or canvas all by yourself in the studio with no artificial discipline of the craft that can offer ingenious solutions, no outside help at all. That's what's difficult. Loves, hates, fears: those are what painting is about. It is very difficult to paint love and hate without bringing in the things they are about. Abstraction can be achieved, and complete abstraction, without total loss of richness and intensity. I do believe that. Only, as I say, it is



much more difficult than most people make out. People pretend that they're born into it these days. They aren't, any more than Mondrian was. He achieved it through a long, lonely sweat, like anyone else.

Twenty-five years ago I painted purely abstract paintings for five years, mixed with some collages (which we weren't allowed to call collages by the galleries, because they said the name suggested that they might come unstuck)—which were done, more or less, from nature. I did actually go out with a big sketch book full of scraps of grey and brown-coloured paper, and a pair of scissors and a bottle of gum or glue. I tried to keep these going side by side with the oils, which were purely abstract—

schematic arrangements of shapes and colours. I wanted, even then, some of the natural energy and fecundity of nature to get into them, even at second hand. It got into Mondrian through his early works, and through his post-cubist pictures.

All this time I had a feeling that—while one was learning a great deal (by putting one colour in a positive shape against others) about the mutual reactions of positive colours and positive shapes, which is the right stuff—at the same time one felt that the things one was producing lacked the richness, the fullness, and the ripeness of life: which, of course, they did, because one wasn't rich, full, or ripe enough; and still one isn't but you can't go on waiting till you die.

S. S.

International Commentary

The Great Schism

On Sino-Soviet Conflicts — By HUGH SETON-WATSON



NO PROBLEM of world politics today is likely to have greater effects on the fate of the human race in the rest of this century than the relationship between Russia and China. Plenty of mystery still surrounds this subject, and it is hardly surprising that the leaders of the two coun-

tries are unwilling to speak plainly about it to citizens of hostile states. But this does not mean that nothing is known of it. On the contrary not only are Chinese official materials available in some quantity in English, in addition to a steadily improving coverage of Chinese news in the Anglo-Saxon press, but the secondary litera-

ture of the subject in Western languages is already large, and includes some works of high quality. This literature certainly makes it possible for persons who are not Old China Hands, know no Chinese, but are politically literate and possess critical powers, to get a reasonable idea of the issues involved.*

It is convenient to distinguish three periods: the background before Communist victory in China, the first eight years of the Communist régime, and the period of acute Sino-Soviet conflict since 1958. In the first two periods an attempt will be made to separate the relations between the Governments from the relations between the Communist Parties, but in the more recent period these have to be taken together. The survey of the course of the conflict will lead to some observations about future prospects.

*I must here mention only three excellent recent sources. First is the periodical *China Quarterly*, which not only contains admirable articles by specialists but published a supplement, *The Sino-Soviet Dispute*, consisting of documents, with commentary, covering the years 1957-1960. Second is a book by Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961* (Princeton University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1962), which is based on careful study of public statements from Soviet or Chinese sources, including the most patient comparison and intelligent interpretation of significant shades and emphases. Third is a book in German, *Peking und Moskau* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1962), by the eminent

traveller and political commentator Klaus Mehnert. It is a pity that Dr. Mehnert, who has lived for many years in Russia, China, and America as well as in Germany, and whose English is almost as good as his native German, did not prepare a simultaneous English edition. But even with the danger of getting partly out of date during the process of publication, it would be worth producing a translation even now. Mehnert is familiar with the details discussed by Zagoria, but his book also has the merit of setting the present against the background of both Russian and Chinese history as well as of his own experience of both countries over some thirty years. This is a book for the intelligent general reader as well as the specialist.

FIRST AMONG THE historical factors is Chinese pride, the survival of the belief that China is "the Middle Kingdom" and that the rest of the earth consists of outer barbarians, placed around the periphery of the civilised world, and destined to pay tribute to it. China, we are repeatedly assured by the Sinologues, is not a nation or an empire but a civilisation. The non-Sinologue gets the impression, from reading or conversing with Sinologues, that there is some unique quality in Chinese arrogance, and something with which very often Westerners who have lived in China consciously identify themselves. This special essence, if it exists, is something which those of us who do not know China cannot grasp. But at least it is not difficult to understand that the educated class of a country which for millennia was either the greatest or one of the greatest Powers, and whose civilisation, if not the oldest, was perhaps the most uninterruptedly maintained for the longest consecutive period in human history, should have passionately resented the humiliations of the last two hundred years at the hands of Europeans. Among the Europeans, perhaps even outstanding among them, were the Russians.

Second in importance are the territorial problems that have caused conflict between China and Russia since the mid-19th century. The Russian government exploited China's involvement in war with Britain and France to seize the land between the Amur, the Ussuri, and the Pacific, and to found there a naval base with the arrogant name of "Ruler of the East" (*Vladivostok*). Russia did its best to seize Korea, a tributary state of China, and its plans were defeated not by China but by Japan. In Manchuria the Russians were more successful, and even after their defeat by the Japanese in 1905 they kept their Chinese Eastern Railway, a fortress of political and military as well as economic value. When the Bolsheviks took the place of the Tsar, they first talked of handing the railway back to China, but they did not repeat the promise when they were in a position to implement it. (They kept the railway until 1935, and then sold it to the Japanese.) In Mongolia the Russians in 1911 appeared as protectors of the Mongols against the Chinese, and though Mongolia was nominally autonomous under Chinese suzerainty it became a vassal of Russia. In 1919 the Bolsheviks repudiated the privileges held by the Imperial government in Mongolia, but in 1921 they invaded it, and since then the Mongolian People's Republic has been a vassal of the Soviet Union. Chinese Turkestan (Sinkiang) was also an object of contention between Imperial Russia and China. Here, too, in the 1930s, Soviet influence was strong, at the expense of the Chinese government.

THE STORY of relations between the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and China is not one of happy comradeship. Soviet advice to the Chinese Communists in the 1920s was close alliance with the Kuomintang. This continued long after Chiang Kai-shek had shown himself an enemy. Insistence by the Comintern (which meant Stalin) that the Chinese Communists should take no action against Chiang led to the massacre of Communist workers in Shanghai in April, 1927, and to further humiliations and repression by the Kuomintang later in the year. These disasters have never been forgotten by Mao Tse-tung, who saved a remnant of Communist forces in the wilderness, and built up his nucleus of power in the following ten years, despite Stalin's preference for his rivals within the party. Factional disputes were connected with the question whether greater reliance should be placed on urban workers or peasants. But essentially this was a dispute not about social analysis but about power. Mao used peasants because they were the only people available to be used by any Chinese revolutionary movement, whether Marxist or not. Mao showed later that he was no romantic "peasant-loving Populist." But his struggle against the Moscow leadership did not teach him to love Stalin.

The Chinese Communists are often called "Stalinists." This is only true in the very vague sense that they are men who use "hard" rather than "soft" methods. It would be better to drop the adjective "Stalinist." The striking thing about them, when they emerged into the public view at the end of World War II, was how little they conformed to the universal Communist practice of fawning on Stalin. In his speech to the 7th Congress of his party, on May 14th, 1945 (published in 1951 under the title *On the Party*), Liu Shao-chi at one point referred to Mao as "a disciple of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin." But this homage is dwarfed by the endless references to "the Thought of Mao Tse-tung," repeatedly described as that which "unites the theories of Marxism-Leninism with the actual practice of the Chinese revolution..." Mao is described as "boldly creative" as a theorist, and is credited with "discarding certain specific Marxist principles and conclusions that were obsolete or incompatible with the concrete conditions in China, and replacing them with new principles and new conclusions that are compatible with China's new historical conditions." In fact, it is not only in the age of Khrushchev that Mao was proclaimed one of the prophets of Marxism.

AFTER THE COMMUNISTS HAD conquered China in 1949, it seemed at first that their relations

with the Soviet Union were friendly. But behind the façade things were not so good. Stalin had given little help to the Communists in the civil war. He admitted to the Yugoslavs in 1948 that he had "underestimated their chances." In 1945 he had secured the interests of the Soviet Union by a treaty with their enemy Chiang Kai-shek which had given him control of the Manchurian railways, Port Arthur and Dairen. These were not given back to the Communists until well after their victory—the railways in 1952 and Port Arthur in 1955. The Soviet government continued to insist on the independence of Mongolia, which Communists and Kuomintang alike regarded as part of China. Perhaps most important, the Soviet government showed itself far from generous with economic aid. In 1945 the industrial equipment of the factories built in Manchuria by the Japanese since 1931 was removed to Russia. It was not until the mid-1950s that it was replaced. The new equipment was of higher quality than that which had been removed, but the Chinese had to pay for it. It is true that in the post-war years the Soviet Union, painfully recovering from wartime devastation, was not in a position to give much help to anyone. But it remained a fact that the total aid given by the Russians to the Chinese was negligible in relation to China's needs for economic development.

In November, 1949, at a Peking conference of Asian and Australasian trade unions belonging to the WFTU, Liu Shao-chi, after paying tribute to the example given to the Communist parties of industrial countries by the Bolshevik Revolution, made the claim that

the path taken by the Chinese people in defeating imperialism and in founding the People's Republic of China is the path that must be taken by the peoples of the various colonial and semi-colonial countries in their fight for national independence and people's democracy.

There was no official Soviet comment on this claim, but discussions of problems of Asian revolution in the Soviet press, both political and academic, showed clearly that the claim was not accepted.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN the Soviet Union and China during the Korean War (and the effect of Chinese military intervention on the relative strength of Soviet and Chinese influence within the Korean Communist party) are still obscure. But one important consequence of the war is clear. The Chinese learned that the newly independent states of Asia, and especially India, were not—as Soviet propaganda since 1947 had said they were—puppet creations of the Western imperialists who continued to rule them by

other means. The Chinese learned that India was an independent state, and that it was both desirable and possible to have friendly relations with her. The Chinese led the way in adopting a new Communist policy towards "Asian neutralists," which received its most striking expression at the Bandung conference of 1955. In the Soviet Union the death of Stalin did not bring a change, perhaps because the new Soviet leaders were exclusively concerned with Lenin's old problem of "Who-whom?" They lagged behind China, and it was not until the Khrushchev-Bulganin visit to India in November, 1955, that courtship of neutralists began to be a priority of Soviet foreign policy.

THE TWENTIETH CONGRESS of the CPSU seems to have been received with mixed feelings in Peking. As we have seen, Mao had little love for Stalin, but Khrushchev's impetuous launching of "de-Stalinisation" was hardly to his taste. In the summer of 1956 the Chinese began to take a hand in the affairs of Eastern Europe. In September, 1956, a Polish delegation to the Ninth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, led by Edward Ochab, found much encouragement for the Polish party's independent attitude (including its opposition to the Soviet view of the Poznan rising of July). For months after this, the "liberal" elements in the Polish party were convinced that China was on their side. In reality, the Chinese were interested not in "liberalism" but in equality between parties, that is, in reducing the predominance of the Soviet party. This became clear when they came out strongly in defence of the Soviet action in Hungary. In an emergency all Communists must stand together. However, this did not mean perpetual deferment to the Soviet comrades, nor did the Chinese patronage of the Poles improve Sino-Soviet relations.

During 1957 the Chinese made their curious experiment with the "Hundred Flowers" campaign. Strongly urged by Mao himself to express their opinions freely, the intellectuals fiercely attacked the régime. The party replied with brutal repression, and a general change of course, in economic and political affairs, from a "right" to a "left" policy. The other event of 1957 which most impressed the Chinese was the launching of the first *sputnik*. This seems to have convinced Mao that the balance of world power had decisively changed, and that a much bolder foreign policy was possible for "the socialist camp." At the conference of Communist parties in Moscow in November, 1957, Mao declared:

I think the characteristic of the situation to-day is the East wind prevailing over the West wind.

That is to say, the socialist forces are overwhelmingly superior to the imperialist forces.

At the end of the year, with the definite restoration of Soviet superiority in Eastern Europe, with Khrushchev's victory over the "anti-Party group" of Molotov and the failure of the Army's challenge represented by Marshal Zhukov, and with the publication of the militant Manifesto of the twelve ruling Communist parties, Sino-Soviet relations seemed once more to be on a sound basis.

HOWEVER, the year 1958 brought the worst conflict yet seen between the two régimes.

The adoption of a "left" course in China led to a rush forward into extreme policies and fantastic ideological claims. A Resolution of August 29th, 1958, announced the introduction of "People's Communes." This decision must no doubt mainly be explained by economic factors. China's economic backwardness was being made more intolerable every year by steadily mounting population pressure. The only line of advance seemed to be the ruthless exploitation of the country's main resource, manpower. The Communes were designed to mobilise manpower still more ruthlessly and systematically than had been the case in Russia at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan. Public hardships could have been reduced only if substantial aid were forthcoming from an advanced industrial country. The only possible source was the Soviet Union, and it seems reasonable to assume that an important reason for the decision to embark on People's Communes was the knowledge that the Soviet Union would not give large-scale aid. But if economic necessity was the motive, the opportunity was taken to claim ideological virtue. The Chinese asserted that through their Communes they had discovered a short-cut to *Communism*. They clearly implied that they might reach Communism ahead of the Soviet Union, whose Revolution had preceded theirs by thirty years. This monstrous affront was greeted in Russia with public silence (though there was plenty of indirect evidence that it was repudiated). What arguments or recriminations were conducted in secret, is not known. But in December the Chinese publicly retreated. A Resolution of the Central Committee of December 10th admitted that even the completion of *socialism* in China would still require "ten, fifteen, twenty, or more years. . . ." There was no more talk of achieving Communism in the near future. But it would take more than a party Resolution to remove the ideological rage caused on both sides by the earlier claim.

In July, 1958, the revolution in Iraq and the

civil war in Lebanon caused an international crisis. Khrushchev suggested a summit meeting. At first he agreed that this should take place at the Security Council of the United Nations—of which the government of China was not a member but the Formosan government was. A few days later he rejected this idea, but still favoured a summit meeting at which India was to be present, but not China. Thus, he was placing the "non-socialist" India above his "socialist" ally China, and also according India a higher status as a Great Power than the 600-million Power China. It is hardly surprising that when Khrushchev arrived in Peking on July 31st, 1958, he received a cold reception.

THERE WAS A FURTHER REASON for this. Acting on the assumption that, with the launching of *sputnik* and of a Soviet ICBM, "the East wind prevailed over the West wind," Mao Tse-tung decided that the time had come to "liberate" Formosa. He expected his Soviet ally to go to the brink of war to support him. But Khrushchev would do nothing more than promise that if the United States attacked mainland China with nuclear weapons he would retaliate on the United States. This of course was not enough. The Chinese alone could not take Formosa, or even the off-shore island of Quemoy. Nor would the Soviet Union give them nuclear weapons to use on their own behalf. The shelling of the off-shore islands from mid-August to the end of September, 1958, ended in a Chinese retreat.

The importance of the Formosa issue in Sino-Soviet hostility cannot be overrated. It is interesting in this connection to note a parallel between the Chinese position and that of some of the East European satellite states. Some of these are territorially "satisfied," while others have "irridentas" of their own, to acquire which is a matter of urgency for their public opinion and for the status of their régime. The most obvious European case is Albania, a country of less than two million inhabitants, along whose border, under Yugoslav rule, live nearly a million Albanians. Two others are Bulgaria (which has claims on Yugoslav and Greek Macedonia) and East Germany (whose rulers cannot be content or secure until they have extended their régime to the whole of Germany). On the other hand the most "satisfied" state is Czechoslovakia, while the three other satellites at least have no claims on lands outside the "socialist camp," even if they secretly cherish the idea of recovering lands from "socialist" neighbours (Poland and Rumania from the Soviet Union, Hungary from Czechoslovakia and Rumania). It is interesting—and can hardly be a coincidence—that in the Sino-Soviet dispute Albania has

strongly taken the Chinese side, the "satisfied" states the Soviet side, while both Bulgaria and East Germany at times during the autumn of 1958 showed sympathy for the Chinese.

AT THE BEGINNING of 1959 there was a lull in Sino-Soviet relations. The doctrine expounded by Khrushchev at the 21st Congress of the CPSU in February, that all socialist states would enter Communism "at about the same time," was intended to smooth over the difficulties. But Chinese resentment at Soviet failure to support China in Formosa, and at its attitude to India and to the new states generally, remained bitter. The bitterness was greatly increased by two factors which continued to operate for the next three years. One was the growing economic chaos in China, largely resulting from the People's Communes policy and the fantastic projects for small-scale heavy industry associated with it. The other was the growing economic aid offered by the Soviet Union to "non-socialist" countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Every year the plight of the Chinese people became more desperate, and every year the discrepancy between massive Soviet aid outside the bloc (or to European countries of the bloc) and Soviet indifference to China's needs became more shocking.

In April, 1959, an article by Yu Chao-li (almost certainly the *nom-de-plume* of a member, or a group of members, of the Chinese Politburo) in *Red Flag* bitterly attacked the Nasser régime in Egypt. It denounced his neutralism: the slogan

"neither East nor West" is only a deliberate attempt to confuse friends with enemies. It is tantamount to saying "neither enemies nor friends." But those who want no friends will naturally not be feared by any enemy. Indeed, this will become a step toward going over to the enemy.

The article then compared Nasser with Chiang Kai-shek in 1927. The fact that both Nasser and Chiang imprisoned Communists was noted. The memory of the bitter events of 1927, and of Moscow's fatal advice to the Chinese Communists, was certainly fresh in the author's mind (though it was not mentioned). Moreover, nearly all that was said in the article against Nasser could equally be said against Nehru. The article was essentially an attack on the whole Soviet policy of support to neutralist states. The whole Soviet doctrine of the progressive role of the "national bourgeoisie" and of the "state sector" and "state capitalist forces" in the new states was clearly unacceptable to the Chinese. Historical memories, genuine ideological disagreement, jealousy of India, and

economic needs combined to produce hostility to Soviet policy. Things were made worse by the development of the Tibetan rebellion in March, 1959, and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India. The influx of Tibetan refugees drew the attention of the Indian public to the frontier with China, and led to the discovery of the large extent of the territory occupied by Chinese troops. This led to public pressure on Nehru at least to speak boldly against China. But when the Indian-Chinese quarrel thus became public knowledge, all that Khrushchev would do was to speak of Soviet friendship for both China and India and to express the pious wish that they would settle their dispute in "a friendly spirit." He then paid his visit to the United States, and went to Peking on September 30th. His reception was even colder than in the previous year. Contrary to normal Communist protocol, no joint communiqué was issued on his departure. In a personal statement he asserted: "We Communists of the Soviet Union consider it our sacred duty, our primary task, to utilise all possibilities in order to liquidate the cold war..."

DURING 1959 IT IS CLEAR that there was a bitter struggle within the Chinese party. The extremist policy was attacked by a "right wing" which blamed it for the country's economic misery. The conflict reached a climax in the meeting of the Central Committee at Lushan in August, 1959. An interesting article in *The China Quarterly* by David Charles, based on reports from refugees who left China in this period, shows that the chief spokesman of the "Right" was the Minister of Defence, Marshal Peng Teh-huai. It appears that during a visit to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from April to June he had written a memorandum criticising the Chinese leadership and passed it to the Soviet government. If there was in fact a combined attack by the Soviet leaders and the Chinese Right on the dominant group in the Chinese party, it was defeated. The Lushan meeting ended in a Resolution which upheld the existing course; a campaign was launched against the Right; and at the end of September—just as Khrushchev reached Peking—Peng was removed from his Ministry.

THE NEXT MAJOR EVENT in the Sino-Soviet controversy was the publication on April 22nd, 1960, the ninetieth anniversary of Lenin's birth, of an article in *Red Flag* entitled "*Long Live Leninism!*" This boldly stated the Chinese doctrine in what was to become the main ideological issue in the Sino-Soviet conflict, the issue of "the inevitability of war." It insisted on the incurably bellicose and predatory nature of

the imperialists, and dismissed the argument that nuclear war was an unacceptable disaster for the human race. Should the imperialists resort to nuclear war, the sacrifices endured by the human race would be worth paying.

On the débris of a dead imperialism, the victorious people would create very swiftly a civilisation thousands of times higher than the capitalist system and a truly beautiful future for themselves.

During the summer the conflict sharpened. At the congress of the Rumanian Communist Party in Bucharest in June, it seems that Khrushchev and the Chinese delegate Peng Chen quarrelled bitterly. According to David Charles, Khrushchev reproached the Chinese with persecuting Marshal Peng Teh-huai for having communicated his views to the Soviet party, and also asserted that Kao Kang, the former Communist boss of Manchuria, who had committed suicide in April, 1955, had suffered only because he had opposed the incorrect policy of his party towards the Soviet Union.

In November–December, 1960, a conference of the Communist Parties of the world wrestled for more than a month with the Sino-Soviet conflict. It ended with the publication of the Manifesto of the 81 parties, which solved nothing. The document indicated a victory for the Soviet point of view, though there were some phrases which appeared designed to placate the Chinese. But in fact the Chinese abandoned none of their positions. They were strongly supported only by the Albanians. The basic reason for Albania's sympathy for China—territorial irrendentism—I have already mentioned. To this two points should be added. First, that ever since Khrushchev's reconciliation with Yugoslavia in 1955, Albania's relations with the Soviet Union had been uneasy. When Yugoslav-Soviet relations were good, the Albanians sulked. When they deteriorated, as in 1958–59, the Albanians expected Soviet action against Yugoslavia, and were disappointed. The second point is that Albania is the only East European Communist state which has no common frontier with either the Soviet Union or another satellite. It is thus less vulnerable to Soviet pressure. Distance from the Soviet Union was a disadvantage in earlier years, when it was difficult to get supplies, but an advantage when relations with the Soviet Union became really bad. Apart from Albania, the Chinese had some support from the Indonesian and Vietnamese parties, and possibly enjoyed more sympathy in some Asian and Latin American parties than their official leaders would admit. But overwhelmingly the Communists of the world supported Moscow against Peking.

THE MANIFESTO CONTAINED one new idea, the invention of the new category of a "State of National Democracy." This was intended to be something intermediate between a "national bourgeois" state such as India and a "people's democracy." In the first type of state the Communists are in opposition, and in the second they not only possess, but are seen to possess, all the power. If one studies the conditions enumerated for the "State of National Democracy" in the Manifesto, and in subsequent official Soviet commentaries, it appears that there are in practice two significant differences between the "national democratic" model and the neutralist "national bourgeois" states. The first is that their foreign policy must be aligned with the Soviet bloc, the second that the Communist Party—even if not formally represented in the government—must possess a considerable portion of real power. In subsequent months it was made clear that Cuba was the model "national democracy"—and that Indonesia, Guinea, Ghana, and Mali were moving fairly satisfactorily in that direction. The concept proved, however, of small value. Cuba soon "developed" so well that it became in fact indistinguishable from a "people's democracy." On the other hand, Guinea quarrelled with the Soviet Union, and Mali ceased to evolve in the desired direction. Moreover the Chinese showed absolutely no interest in the notion. They continued their opposition to Soviet policy towards India, Egypt, and Iraq. For their own part, however, they had no objection to supporting, in Morocco, a "national bourgeois" régime certainly more reactionary than that of Nasser, and, in the Yemen, a slave-owning "feudal" monarchy.

DURING THE FIRST HALF of 1961 there was at least less open hostility between Moscow and Peking, but there was no reconciliation. In China economic failure reached the point of famine, and Soviet help was negligible.

At the 22nd Congress of the CPSU the Sino-Soviet conflict once more became public, with Chou En-lai's ostentatious homage at Stalin's mausoleum, the Congress decision to remove Stalin's body from it, and the denunciations of Albania. Thereafter the conflict took the form of polemics between Moscow and Tirana, with the Chinese press giving greater publicity to the Albanian than to the Soviet point of view. "The anti-Marxist liar N. Khrushchev" was an Albanian phrase. Chinese attacks on Soviet policies usually referred to "the modern revisionists." In 1962 there was something of a lull in the summer, but a new outbreak in the autumn. At the time of the Cuban crisis it looked for a time as if there would be a

rapprochement. Already in September, 1962, the Chinese Ambassador, who was thought to have left for another post, had returned to Moscow and had been given an exceptionally warm welcome, attended by all the most prominent figures in the Soviet Union.

The Cuban crisis and the Chinese attack on India coincided, and during the Cuban crisis the Soviet government appeared for a few days to be backing the Chinese. But when the crisis was over, it became clear that Khrushchev was not going to commit himself. The Chinese, speaking through the Albanians, denounced the Soviet government for failing in Cuba and for refusing to condemn India. For example, at the November Revolution celebrations in Tirana, Hysni Kapo spoke of

the renegades from Marxism-Leninism—the modern revisionists like N. Khrushchev and Tito's treacherous band... the revisionist leadership of the Italian Communist Party.

The same speech had the sentence:

The armed attacks of Indian reactionary circles with Nehru at their head against the territorial integrity of the Chinese republic, as the facts of recent days had clearly shown, were also inspired by the imperialists—American, British, and others—who were now sending vast quantities of arms to India destined for an aggressive war against people's China.

Who, in the Albanian view, were the "other" imperialists?

AT THE CONGRESSES of the Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, and Italian communist parties, held in the last week of 1962, there were unpleasant clashes between the Chinese delegate and the others. The Peking *People's Daily*, without specifically mentioning the Soviet government, made clear its view that in Cuba Khrushchev had been guilty both of "adventurism" in introducing the missile bases and of "capitulationism" in removing them. A *Red Flag* article at the beginning of January suggested that the modern revisionists had fallen into Trotskyist errors. To them, it argued,

the differences between proletariat and bourgeoisie, imperialism and oppressed nations, capitalism and socialism, just wars and unjust wars, revolution and counter-revolution... have lost significance. In short, they have thrown to the winds all the teachings of Marxism, all the teachings of Leninism.

In his speech at the congress of the Socialist Unity Party of the Soviet zone of Germany (on January 16th, 1963), Khrushchev referred to the suggestion by "some comrades" that there

should be a new conference of Communist parties. He said that he was in principle willing to have a conference, but felt that at the present time "there would clearly be few hopes of successfully settling the existing divergencies," and that a conference would only exacerbate them. It would be better to wait, and to stop polemics for the time being. However, the Chinese delegate, Wu Hsiu-chuan, responded by violent attacks on Yugoslavia. *Pravda's* comment was that Wu had spoken "in absolutely inadmissible terms."

A series of articles in *People's Daily* at the beginning of March carried on the ideological polemic against the modern revisionists. It denounced those who "claim to possess the totality of Marxist-Leninist truth," but are "cowardly as mice." The Chinese proudly declared that they had published the articles hostile to themselves, together with their replies, but that the press of their opponents would not do likewise.

You fear the truth. The spectre of "dogmatism," the spectre of genuine Marxism-Leninism, is haunting the world, and it threatens you.

Hardly less alarming for the Soviet leaders than this echo of the Communist Manifesto was another argument, raised in *People's Daily* on March 7th. Some time earlier, reacting to Chinese criticism of his retreat in Cuba, Khrushchev had taunted the Chinese with their failure to liquidate the imperialist outposts of Hong-kong and Macao. *People's Daily*, replying ostensibly to a similar taunt from the American Communist Party, pointed out that there were nine unequal treaties formerly signed by China with imperialist Powers which had annexed Chinese territory in north, south, east, and west, and held leased territories on the seaboard and in the hinterland of China. These nine clearly included those by which Imperial Russia had acquired the Maritime Province with Vladivostok, and some territories in Central Asia over which China had once had sovereignty. *People's Daily* now asked:

By raising questions of this category, do you aim at re-opening all the unequal treaty questions in order to have a general settlement? Has it ever entered your head what the consequences would be?

On March 10th it was announced in Peking that there had been an exchange of letters between the Soviet and Chinese Communist parties which had "affirmed the necessity of holding talks between the two parties on important questions affecting the international Communist movement at present." The Chinese stated that they would be glad to see Khrushchev or some other leading Soviet comrade in Peking.

WHETHER THIS WAS a genuinely friendly move, or merely another manoeuvre in the political warfare, was not clear. It seemed, however, highly improbable that a conference could now remove the most important sources of conflict between the Soviet Union and China. These are: (1) Soviet refusal of brinkmanship on behalf of Formosa; (2) Soviet refusal of economic aid to China on a scale remotely approaching China's needs; (3) jealousy of India and resentment of Soviet aid to India; (4) the ideological claims of Mao as a prophet of Marxism; and (5) latent territorial disputes of which the most important is probably Mongolia, but which may now include also the future of the Far Eastern Province of the Soviet Union. It is impossible to assign an order of priority to these, but together they constitute a formidable body of disagreement.

WHAT ARE the possible consequences of the Sino-Soviet conflict? I can offer no more than a few working hypotheses which may be worth keeping in mind.

The most important of the unknown factors is the development of the economy. The pressure of population on resources relentlessly increases. It is sometimes argued that because Stalin was able to achieve economic progress in the 1930s by ruthless mobilisation of manpower, the Chinese will be able to do the same, even if at greater cost in human suffering. But it is arguable that the problems facing China are different in kind from those which faced Russia in the 1930s. Far too little comparative study has been made of the two economies, and perhaps even in Peking too little is known. Superficial comparisons are not enlightening. China's economic problems may be substantially increased if it becomes necessary to fight a long war with India. In March, 1963, it seems possible that the Indian-Chinese quarrel may be allowed to smoulder quietly for a time, but this is by no means certain. China was able to achieve successes on the north-east frontier in October and November, 1962, because her immediately available striking force was larger and better armed than the Indian; but in a long war India, with substantial help from the West, could put up a resistance which before long would place a severe additional strain on China. Moreover, China has other military opponents of which at least some account must be taken: the Tibetan guerrillas and the Formosa army. Thus a second unknown factor, the strength of India's will to resist, will be of great importance.

In March, 1963, it appears that economic conditions in China have somewhat improved in recent months. However, in the longer term it is difficult to see how China can stand up to its

economic and military tasks unless its whole economic policy is reversed and unless it receives substantial Soviet aid. But it is most unlikely that the Soviet government will do anything to help the present Chinese leadership. It is even arguable that Moscow would rather see Indian victories, the loss of Tibet, economic chaos, and occupation of part of the mainland by Chiang Kai-shek, than see the Mao Tse-tung-Lieu Shao-chi leadership strengthened. However this may be, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that a restoration of Sino-Soviet friendship, and a large increase of Soviet aid to China, will require a drastic purge of the Peking leadership. Whether this is likely to occur, I am quite unqualified to predict. Yet even if there were a purge in China, we may doubt whether the Soviet government would show much enthusiasm for helping China. It may well feel that *any* government in China is likely to frustrate the aims of Soviet policy in regard to Japan, India, and South-East Asia, and to interfere with Soviet-American relations in unpredictable and dangerous ways. It will almost certainly feel that the economic demands of *any* Chinese government would far exceed the resources which *any* Soviet government can spare, at a time when the demands of the Soviet people for a higher standard of living can no longer be ignored.

MEANWHILE, CHINESE ACTION against India has affected Soviet policy both in the *tiers monde* and in Eastern Europe.

Soviet strategy towards the under-developed countries has been based for some years on wooing the "national bourgeoisie." Countries allied with the West (in CENCO or SEATO) have not been regarded as independent states. But non-aligned countries are considered politically, but not yet economically, independent. The goal held out to them by Soviet propaganda has been "economic independence," and the bogey which they have been urged to avoid has been "neo-colonialism." As long as any foreign private business firms control any important branches of the economy of a new state, neo-colonialism is said to be present. Economic independence can be achieved only when all major foreign business is expropriated, when Western aid is for the most part replaced by the "unselfish, disinterested aid of the socialist camp", and when trade with the Soviet bloc is more important than trade with the West. Meanwhile the "state sector" of the economy in such countries as India and Egypt is regarded as "objectively progressive," and is felt to deserve Soviet support, even if it is controlled by the "national bourgeoisie," and not by "the working class" (a euphemism for the Communist Party), and though the claims of such men as Nehru,

Nasser, or Nkrumah to be "socialists" are consequently fraudulent.

This policy brought considerable successes to the Soviet government in the years 1957-62. The "neo-colonialist" charge is particularly effective in tropical Africa, in many of whose new states it must be admitted that it is more than a bogey. But the show-piece of Soviet policy was certainly India. The Chinese attack appears to have wrecked Soviet policy in India. Even if the fighting is not revived, it seems improbable that India will for a long time revert to the Nehru-Menon "double standard" which gave such satisfaction in Moscow. In the perhaps improbable event that the talk about Indian-Pakistan reconciliation were translated into action, the Soviet loss would be still greater. On the other hand it is not certain that India's changed position need damage Soviet interests in Africa. It may be that the Arab states will be worried by India's troubles—but in tropical Africa the Indians are not loved. It is by no means clear that the Indian-Chinese fighting will diminish the attraction of the radical African nationalists towards the Communist world. Nor is there much reason to believe that Latin American revolutionaries will prefer a Chinese to a Soviet orientation. The Soviet Union is in a position to give them far more help than is China. No doubt Castro prefers Mao to Khrushchev, but what can Mao do for him? No doubt those Communists who wish to make greater use of the peasant guerrillas in Colombia and in north-east Brazil will look to Peking for inspiration, but the existence of "left-wing sectarianism" within some Latin American Communist parties is not likely to create much alarm in Moscow. In fact, the harm done to Soviet policy in the *tiers monde* by Chinese action may be confined to the Indian sub-continent. Even so, this is a serious loss.

AN IMPORTANT EFFECT of the conflict with China has been that Khrushchev has felt an increasing need for the support of other Communist parties, and has had to pay the price of granting them greater freedom from Soviet control.

Two East European Communist parties which have very little genuine support among their peoples—the Hungarian and Rumanian—have used this situation to court greater popularity by giving their subjects better material conditions and somewhat more liberty. This is most striking in the Hungarian case. At the Congress of his party in November, 1962, Kádár went so far as to say that discrimination on grounds of class origin should be ended, and spoke in favour of much greater intellectual liberty. In Poland, Gomulka has successfully

maintained his autonomy from Moscow as far as internal policy is concerned, though in recent months his policies have been less rather than more "liberal." The East German party is probably the most unpopular of them all. But Ulbricht has done nothing to endear himself to his subjects: rather he has profited from his indispensability to Moscow in order to maintain his personal autocracy.

The two strongest parties, the Czechoslovak and the Bulgarian, have been ruled for some years past by advocates of "tough," or—as it is often though inaccurately called—of "Stalinist" policies. The Czech boss Novotny was still in control in March, 1963. But the intransigence of the Bulgarians seems to have become intolerable to Khrushchev, possibly because he could not afford to permit it in a country which has long frontiers with non-bloc countries, is not far from Albania, and has territorial claims on Yugoslavia. It is reasonable to assume that Soviet intervention had something to do with the purge at the October 1962 Congress of the Bulgarian party, which removed the most prominent "Stalinists" and placed the reliable *apparatchik* Zhivkov in charge of the party and government.

In non-bloc Communist parties in Europe the trend has certainly been towards less subservience to Moscow and less doctrinal rigidity—in short, towards a "right-wing" course. This has been most marked in the Italian party, which has incurred the bitterest insults of the Albanians. It seems also likely that if the French party thinks there are good prospects of a Popular Front in France, it too will adopt a more "moderate" posture.

IN GENERAL, Western observers may be pleased that Soviet policy in India has suffered a reverse, and that Hungarians, Rumanians, and perhaps now even Bulgarians are enjoying a more agreeable existence. For both these changes they may thank the Chinese. If there should arise a rival Communist international, Trotskyism with a territorial base, under Chinese leadership, with its agents intriguing within existing Communist parties or creating rival parties, this too would help the West. But extravagant speculations about an alliance "between the West and Russia against China" would seem to me to have no justification for the predictable future. It is also important not to fall into the error of regarding Khrushchev as "a liberal" because the Chinese dislike him, or of interpreting the Soviet double-talk "peaceful coexistence" as equivalent to the Western concept of "peace." Before the Cuban crisis, Khrushchev appeared to believe that the incurable decadence of "the capitalist world" and the weak will of its

leaders, would give him victory on a world scale without war and—in contrast to the Chinese view—without even having “to go to the brink.” In Cuba he tried his hand at brinkmanship, thus coming closer to the action recommended by the Chinese (though there are no grounds for believing that he was influenced by Chinese pressure). Having approached the brink, he drew back, incurring Chinese abuse. But this does not mean that his world-wide aims have been abandoned.

A realistic Western policy will bear all this in mind. It will avoid all dogmatism, either a doctrinaire belief in negotiation, or a doctrinaire belief in toughness for toughness’ sake. It will recognise that both Khrushchev and Mao are enemies of the West and enemies of each other.

The Deep North

LAST SUMMER I wrote an article about life in the Industrial North, with special reference to Manchester where I live. The article was printed in the December 1962 issue of *ENCOUNTER*. Before it appeared, several other pieces came out on the same general theme—Frank Kermode in the *New Statesman*, Neal Ascherson in the *Observer*, David Holden in the *Guardian*. I found I was suddenly one of many people who were writing about and worried about the North: about joblessness, lack of amenities, loss of population, loss of nerve. North *v.* South is of course not a new topic; it has been under discussion, serious or facetious, for at least a hundred years. But it was given a fresh relevance by the unemployment figures for Merseyside, Teeside, and Tyneside, by the much rosier statistics for the London area, and perhaps by the awareness of an approaching general election. More widely still, the recent discussion shows an anxiety to find formulas with which to define the confused, rather dismal mood of British life.

So much has been said about North and South in the last few months that the formulation has almost become a national parlour-game. Years ago we played the game of *U* and *Non-U*; then pretended that there were “Two Cultures”; and so on. Nowadays, every newspaper columnist and speechmaker seems likely to drag in a reference to North and South. The Bishop of London calls on the churches to resist the drift to the South. A Manchester clergyman responds in his parish magazine with a list of “ten sound reasons why the North offers a better life than

the South.” Northern Chamber of Commerce spokesmen declare that the alleged southward drift is a figment of irresponsible imaginations. Politicians announce a heartfelt concern for the under-privileged North.

Simplifications of this either/or kind have a gross appeal, like that of advertising jingles. They are often too crude to bring any useful clarification. But North *v.* South seems a more real and important division than, say, the supposed gulf between Snow and Leavis. It corresponds to genuine, discernible and deeply felt differences. I was convinced of this by local reactions to my own article, which apparently infuriated some Mancunians. At least, newspaper summaries of the article did. A few prominent citizens told me privately that they agreed with me about the ugliness and mediocrity of present-day Manchester. Others said that while they might agree in part they deplored my tactics. I was harming the “image” of Manchester: stirring up dislike of the University, where I teach, among the townspeople: making reform more difficult, by antagonising the city fathers. Other people sent abusive letters, mostly anonymous, or were quoted in outraged tones in the local papers. An elderly member of the University’s administrative staff upbraided me for failing to put the blame for what he called the “crucifixion” of the North where it belonged—upon the South. Some Mancunians were quite clearly baffled that I should find fault with a place they themselves genuinely admire and love. As a whole such comments seemed to reinforce the notion that the North considers itself a special region, and that it is a good deal more aggravated by the South than *vice versa*. But the argument also tends to be conducted in surprisingly local terms. Over and over, I was asked whether I was a native Mancunian, with the implication that none but a native had the right to speak his mind so uncouthly. On answering that I was born in Rochdale, a few miles out of Manchester, I was informed—with a knowing smile, as if this explained the whole mystery—that I was not a true Mancunian. Or I learned that I was not a true Mancunian/Northerner because no true Mancunian/Northerner would have written what I had written. A neat circular argument.

It is also an argument with a bad conscience, reminiscent in a way of the attitudes of Americans from the Deep South—their South, *i.e.* with the geography reversed. They too cherish the feeling that they are different from and nicer than the Yankees (or, in the English situation, the dwellers in the Home Counties): that they are more hospitable, more clannish, more conservative. They too feel punished and unified by the past. Both proud and ashamed of

their heritage, they see themselves as the victims of circumstances that they are not able or willing to repudiate. They too worry, or ought to worry, about the drain of talent from their region. They too resent criticism, all the more when it comes from renegades. Is there then an English Deep North, equivalent to the American Deep South? Old times here, we might say, are not forgotten. We swear to live and die in Dixie but head off elsewhere. The university official who was so angry with me has just gone to live in retirement, not in his native Lancashire but in a resort town on the South coast.

HAPPILY THE PARALLEL is inexact. The North *v.* South division is nothing like as sharp as that between Union and Confederacy in the United States, or between the North and the Mezzogiorno in Italy. England is not one of the "breakable" nations of Luigi Barzini's arresting phrase (see ENCOUNTER, "The Difference in the South," June 1962). The industrial malaise of the North of England is only a more acute manifestation of troubles that afflict the whole British economy. The Manchester clergyman was justified in pointing out to his parishioners the economic and social advantages of Northern city life—cheaper and more plentiful housing, shorter distances of travel to work and the like—over those of the sprawling London area. These factors make many Northerners unwilling to drift southward, even if they do not yet offer a powerful counter-attraction to discontented Southerners.

Still, the North has succeeded, perhaps for the first time in a century, in making the South aware of its woes. The neglect and condescension that gave the North a genuine grievance are passing away—permanently, one hopes. And the North's own approach is altering. True, the speeches of Lord Mayors still reveal near-lethal concentrations of the old civic complacency. But the amount of non-parochial, sensible, remedial comment has vastly increased. I am happy to report of my own city, for example, that the new airport, Ringway, is in operation and that it is a respectable contribution to airport architecture: it need no longer be called Ringworm. In conjunction with Belle Vue, the city is to provide a worthy new exhibition hall to replace the present grubby erections. Manchester University, perhaps belatedly but not too late, is to appoint a planner to impose a degree of harmony on its large, intricate campus. The city likewise is in search of a planner who, like those already appointed at Liverpool and Newcastle, will devise a coherent, ambitious scheme. There are indications that such plans may include arcading and covered pavements. There is talk of new central amenities such as

an all-year skating rink. I would like to see this adjacent to my own pet scheme—a glassed-in tropical garden. The Civic Trust for the North-West, established a couple of years ago, has been doing good by stealth in promoting a wide variety of modest programmes for self-improvement.

ONE DANGER is that such plans may be too timid and too slow. Another danger—particularly for the areas of heavy unemployment—is that the North may seek to make the South too much the scapegoat for its own deficiencies. A worthwhile spirit of reform will never be born unless the North, including its Lord Mayors, is prepared to stand up, as new members of Alcoholics Anonymous do, and publicly confess its shortcomings—and its own culpability. Given enough of the right kind of indignation and energy, the region need never become England's Deep North.

Marcus Cunliffe

Letter from Paris

Shared Silence

FOR SOME WEEKS NOW, the Parisian daily and weekly papers have been devoting long articles to the young visiting Soviet poet, Andrei Voznesensky. He has enjoyed the kind of publicity normally bestowed only on the stars of the entertainment world. Indeed, the tumult has been partly caused by the knowledge that—like his friend, Evtushenko, for whom Paris is preparing a similar welcome as I pen these lines—Voznesensky is a sort of Johnny Halliday with thousands of devoted fans in the U.S.S.R. But, in hastening to salute this new celebrity, our journalists are doing something highly significant and of which they may not be fully conscious. They are paying homage, in the person of the young poet, to a "harbinger of good tidings", the first man to bear witness to a transformation of the public mind which has shown itself, initially, in connection with the most inward form of language, the language of the soul. A French poet who wrote like Voznesensky and gave public readings as he does, would arouse hardly any interest in France. Yet those of us—whether Frenchmen, *émigré* Rus-

PIERRE EMMANUEL is the well-known French poet and critic.

sians, or Soviet Russians—who listened to him the other day, found ourselves silently interrogating his poems, as if they were so many enigmas. And it is precisely their enigmatic quality, faint though it may be, which fascinates the younger generation in Russia, through pointing towards a hidden reality. Parched as they are by official realism, they can slake their thirst on this hidden reality.

I have met Voznesensky several times, as indeed, during the last few years, I have met many other Soviet writers whose visits to Paris have caused less commotion. The language barrier makes communication impossible. Questions, when conveyed through an interpreter, have no bite, and answers lose their tone and all their subtleties. Nowhere is this limitation more painfully obvious than in those matters where soul is trying to speak to soul. My heart bled for Voznesensky at his press conference, as if I myself were undergoing the experience. Questions and answers were uttered in all good faith—the good faith itself being almost automatic—but they merely brought forth a string of clichés about poetry. There was talk of the “social function of poetry” and of the “freedom of the artist”; both phrases contain obvious suggestions, but what meaning had they exactly for the interviewers and for the poet being interviewed? Do we realise, deep within us, that freedom of expression begins with, is in fact *based on*, the possibility of allowing the soul to speak? And that the soul, when it speaks, utters the eternal, forbidden commonplaces—God, love, rebellion, faith, and human destiny? It seems to me that Voznesensky and the other Russians like him are claiming, clumsily and perhaps heroically, that every man has a right to his inner life, to his own religion or rejection of religion, and to his particular destiny. But these things, which are so essential to us all, were mentioned by no-one at the press conference; no-one *knew* how to speak about them. Yet a time will come when they will have to be spoken about.

I try to imagine the effort these poets have to make to remedy the loss of soul they suffered through the destruction of their heritage, which has been mutilated, deprived of its spirituality, subjected to sacrilegious disfiguration and obliterated from public memory. How can such total frustration be overcome? How can the alienation it has caused be rectified? How can the power of speech be recovered after years of fear? Will these men who handle words arrive, or be allowed to arrive, at that point where interdiction stops and no censorship can any longer be brought to bear on the forces of being?

VOZNESENSKY IS ONE of the younger generation's heroes—I use the word in the mythical sense—

whose task it is to go forth and vanquish the interdiction. Does he realise all that he represents or is he still only a *scout* (to use the word applied to him by a great poet, after listening to his performance), an enthusiastic boy-scout running ahead of a still hidden army who will bring with them a still deeper expression of the Word? Perhaps he has not grasped the enormous significance of his task of liberation, and he may be deflected from it by a celebrity deliberately organised by subtle politicians, who see which way the current is moving and how the poet is almost carried along by it.

Voznesensky was accompanied by Paustovsky, Nekrassov, and some other writers, who were less exposed to the general curiosity than he was. They were much older, some of them even belonging to the same generation as Pasternak. They had lived through the great purges, then the war, then further great purges. Voznesensky has no experience of this past. He is a mid-century Russian, who must look upon Stalin as a bogey-man. The older men suffered under Stalin, and it is difficult, and perhaps useless, to talk to them about the Apocalyptic times they have lived through. They gave us no information about the Terror, but made us feel how they had been able to bear it without losing their souls; this they conveyed by a certain quality of silence and by their way of being attentive, in communion with us, to essential things which needed no defining. Everything about them seemed to be saying: “We have survived. Survival is no easy matter. We are the artesian wells of the hidden reality of our people. Like them, we have remained steadfast. We have not changed.”

We, their hosts, shared their silence, vaguely sensing the trials they had been through, and from how cruel a winter they had recently emerged. Like the ancient Christians, we would, on parting, break a tessera together—the tessera of shared silence—thanks to which we would be able to recognise each other later, in other places. During this silence, we had sealed a pact of brotherhood, of which, ever afterwards, we would be the living symbols. We would bear witness for them, after they had gone, and they would do the same for us in their own country.

I WONDER WHAT they can have thought of Georges Auric's decision, as Director of the Paris Opéra, to cancel Rudolf Nureyev's engagement, after pressure from the Cultural Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy. The latter intimated that his government would refuse all exchanges in the future, if the former Leningrad dancer appeared on our national stage. Auric's servile acceptance of such an incredible veto was only equalled by the shocking unconcern with

which he admitted the fact in public. In a man like him, both attitudes are surprising. Moreover, I cannot believe that the decision was made except by agreement with André Malraux, Minister of Culture. It would be pointless to emphasise the stupidity of behaviour which leaves the door open to still more deplorable abuses in the future.

I would like to make just one remark for the benefit of those in authority. What attracts us about Soviet writers and artists is not that they come to the West as publicity agents for the aesthetic new look adopted in their country, but the fact that we share with them a universal language of communication, a spiritual domain which is neither France, nor Europe, nor the U.S.S.R. but common to all men living in the present; we share, too, a common passion, the difficult search for the truly human. When a representative of the Soviet Embassy, taking what is, to say the least, a surprising liberty, threatens to suspend delivery of his precious merchandise—singers or ballet dancers—and we allow ourselves to be blackmailed, we are adopting his conception of art and artists. It may be in accordance with some notion of State slavery to regard its artists as strong currency, the export of which has to be strictly controlled, so that Nureyev's appearance at the Paris Opéra is a form of illegal traffic that the Soviet Government cannot allow. But it would be outrageous if M. Malraux took this view. Alas, as it happens, he has confirmed the Russians in their belief that any artist can be parcelled up and despatched back and forth like the *Mona Lisa*.

If artists themselves—and very few have protested, so far as I know—allow themselves to be treated in this way, that is their business. But it would take a very craven person to disregard the fate suffered by Nureyev who—as Auric himself recently recalled with tactless relevance in a declaration to *Le Figaro*—experienced his first sensation of freedom on the stage of the Opéra. It is now eighteen months since he was granted right of asylum. All he asked for was hospitable silence; no-one can say that he has ever displayed the slightest indiscretion, or ceased to be very Russian, bearing witness, in his own way, to the passion and hope of his people. Others have gone through the same moral crisis and taken the opposite decision; they would be the last to pass judgment on him. Let us, at least, have enough imagination to understand that decision. After an artist has suffered great internal stress and gone through bitter periods of doubt, must he be wounded still more deeply through being hounded by filthy hypocrites and finding the police waiting for him in the office of the Director of the Opéra?

I think I would be failing Soviet writers and artists and betraying their instinctive, and long repressed, need for that freedom which Nureyev has sought outside Russia, and which they are courageously resolved to conquer within, if I let them think that this incident, which concerns our common dignity, has produced no feeling of embarrassment in France. Many of us are red in the face with shame, and even more so with anger, and we feel with them.

Pierre Emmanuel

BOOKS & WRITERS

An Intellectual Disaster

By George Lichtheim

GEORG LUKACS has long been a puzzle to the considerable number of Western ex-Communists for whom Marxism in its Sovietised form has become an embarrassment and who look for a return to the Hegelian, *i.e.*, German-idealist, sources of their faith. In principle his philosophic origins in the pre-1914 age, and his checkered political career since 1918, seem to mark him out as the natural spokesman of a "Western" form of Marxism, the more so since orthodox attacks on his real or supposed heresies have erupted at intervals over the past four decades.

Yet a truthful account of his numberless deviations and recantations during this period must add to the embarrassment which his putative followers experience when contemplating the ravages of the Stalin era. From the first passive acceptance of official discipline in 1923/4, via the abject and almost hysterical repudiation of his earlier views in 1934, to the abortive rebellion of 1956 and the immediate reversion to semi-orthodoxy in the following year (which may have helped to save his life, but did nothing to raise him in the esteem of his former Hungarian pupils)—Lukacs' habitual style of accommodation to the changing requirements of the Party line has baffled both friends and detractors. Like Ehrenburg—a comparatively minor figure, but in some respects his counterpart in the journalistic field—he has survived all the upheavals of the Stalin era, to emerge at last into the comparatively tolerant, but distinctly philistine, atmosphere of the Khrushchev régime. It is as though Condorcet had lived to see the triumph of Louis Philippe and Guizot. The irony is heightened by the fact that Lukacs—to judge by his most recent pronouncements—is quite unaware of the radical discontinuity between his own system of values and that of the society which has arisen from

the East European cauldron of the past half-century.

The somewhat spectral quality of Lukacs' survival in an environment which has outgrown, or repudiated, his original hopes and anticipations is reflected in the unimpeachably orthodox style of the lengthy essay (now available in an English-language translation) which he composed in 1955–56.¹ Dated "Budapest, May 1962," this preface faithfully employs the anti-Stalinist terminology officialised since 1961, while retaining the essentially Stalinist characterisation of the Soviet orbit as a realm of "socialism" opposed to a Western capitalist-imperialist bloc. At the same time Lukacs has taken advantage of the new climate to stress the perils of "dogmatic sectarianism," whereas the preface to the original German edition (written in April 1957, *i.e.*, six months after the abortive Hungarian revolution in which he had briefly come out on the "revisionist" side) not only dwelt effusively on "Stalin's positive achievements," but made the dutiful affirmation that revisionism was to be regarded as "the greatest present danger for Marxism." Confronted with such a record of pliability, the critical spectator may be forgiven for wondering whether Lukacs' current strictures on Stalinism and dogmatism are anything but further evidence of an unbroken determination to remain in the swim.

YET PARADOXICALLY it is just this fanatical attachment to the Party line—whatever it may be at any moment—that rescues Lukacs from the imputation of mere opportunism. He has often changed his mind about this or that aspect of Soviet reality, but he has never—since the crisis of 1923/4 which resulted in his moral collapse and capitulation to the hierarchy—wavered in his conviction that in the long run the Party cannot err. Moreover, internal evidence suggests that his submission to Marxism-Leninism has long been total. This, incidentally, is the prime reason why for the past decade he has continued to disappoint his "revisionist" would-

¹ *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*. Translated from the German by JOHN and NECKE MANDER. Merlin Press, London, 1963. 16s.

be followers. They were waiting to hear him say some of the things that since 1956 have publicly been said in Poland, but though in 1962 he felt able to affirm that "the disastrous legacy of Stalinism" must be got rid of, this was capped by a reminder that the task now was "to rediscover the creative core of the teaching of Marx, Engels, and Lenin"—as though Lenin were not the principal obstacle to the "Westernisation" of Marxism. So far from this being another piece of lip-service, a consideration of Lukacs' actual present-day views on contemporary literature shows that he is indeed a good Leninist—hence incapable of making those critical distinctions which have enabled Marxist writers in Western Europe (and the genuine "revisionists" in Poland) to say something sensible about the quite real problems of intellectual sterility and pointless literary artifice which confront European and American literature at the present time.

IDEALLY it ought to be the critic's task to demonstrate all this in detail, taking as one's text both the essay on *Contemporary Realism* and the earlier volume entitled *The Historical Novel*.² Although (or because) twenty years lie between their writing, the two books complement one another. *The Historical Novel* was composed in the winter of 1936-7: at the very height of the Great Purge, and some two years after Lukacs—in an address to the philosophical section of the Communist Academy in Moscow—had performed the first of a long sequence of public acts of self-abasement by denouncing his own pre-Leninist writings (notably the famous *History and Class-consciousness* of 1923) as "idealist" and "objectively" Fascist.

"The front of idealism is the front of Fascist counter-revolution and its accomplices, the Social-Fascists. Every concession to idealism, however insignificant, spells danger to the proletarian revolution."³

Though less frenzied in tone, Lukacs' critical writings during this period, including *The Historical Novel*, faithfully reflect the temper of this remarkable pronouncement, notably in their determination to re-write the history of contemporary literature in terms of Fascism and anti-Fascism. To this end "the historical novel

of anti-Fascist humanism" (as represented by some worthy, but distinctly second-rate, German emigré authors of unimpeachably bourgeois-democratic outlook: it was after all the Popular Front period) had to be provided with a genealogical tree reaching back to Walter Scott (not a democrat, but a realist, hence to Lukacs a forerunner of his real heroes: Balzac and Tolstoy).

This approach presumably accounts for the fact that when *The Historical Novel* was published in translation last year, it was well received by a number of British reviewers who did not greatly care for the author's Marxism, but liked his fondness for Scott (and who possibly shared his disdain for modern literature). One wonders, though, what they made of a passage such as the following:

Scott had only one worthy follower in the English language who took over and even extended certain of the principles underlying his choice of theme and manner of portrayal, namely the American Cooper. In his immortal novel cycle, *The Leather Stocking Saga*, Cooper sets an important theme of Scott, the downfall of gentile [i.e., tribal] society, at the centre of his portrayal. Corresponding to the historical development of North America, this theme acquires an entirely new complexion. In Scott it is a case of a centuries-long, conflict-ridden development, of the various ways in which the survivals of gentile society are accommodated to the feudal system and later to rising capitalism. . . . In America the contrast was posed far more brutally and directly by history itself; the colonising capitalism of France and England destroys physically and morally the gentile society of the Indians which had flourished almost unchanged for thousands of years.

This might be described as orthodox Leninism, both as to sentiment and style. (Lukacs' insensitivity to the German language, in which he has composed nearly all his writings, and his indifference to style in general, would require separate treatment: it seems to have been part of his self-imposed Bolshevisation, for prior to the 1924 catastrophe he affected an elegant, even somewhat precious, manner.) Its relevance to literary criticism, or even to literary sociology, is debatable. In any case 350 pages of this sort of thing, unrelieved by a single gleam of humour, might seem rather a burden upon the reader. Yet this turgid monograph is not without its merits, once account is taken of the fact that the author is concerned with long-run changes in the cultural pattern. Since for Lukacs (as for every Hegelian) form and content make a whole, he is able to relate formal changes—e.g., the Romantic "poetisation" of the historical novel—to conflicting tendencies in society. Thus, (to take one of the many examples he offers)

² Merlin Press, 1962. 36s.

³ G. Lukacs, "The Significance of Materialism and Empirio-Criticism for the Bolshevisation of Communist Parties." (*Pod Znamenem Marksizma*, July-August 1934, pp. 143-8). See also Mr. Morris Watnick's study "Georg Lukacs: An Intellectual Biography," in *Survey* (No. 24, April-June 1958), where this grotesque episode is analysed at some length.

in discussing the Romantic upsurge in French literature after 1815 he is able—with the direct help of Marx admittedly—to discern the survival in Chateaubriand of that part of the Enlightenment tradition which had its original locus in the courtly aristocracy, and to contrast both his and Vigny's "ahistoricism" with the continuation of the 18th-century tradition in Stendhal and Mérimée. This sort of historical-sociological cross-reference, when backed by wide reading, can be illuminating, and in the more strictly literary parts of *The Historical Novel* the method does come to life: notably in the section contrasting the novel and the drama. Indeed when he is analysing the formal (and historical) differences between the epic and the drama, Lukacs here and there almost recovers the intellectual level of his youthful work, culminating in his fragmentary but magnificent *Theorie des Romans* (1916). This may be no more than a way of saying that he has always lived on his early insights, but that is a common enough fate. The tragedy is that these insights have been progressively buried under a monstrous load of sociological jargon, self-conscious popularisation, and polemical journalism.

IT IS TRUE THAT, so far as conscious subjection to the Zhdanovist line on "Socialist Realism" is concerned, the worst now seems to be over. In the 1960 preface to the English edition of *The Historical Novel*, dutiful praise of Halldor Laxness (an Icelandic novelist and Party member) was balanced by an appreciative reference to Lampedusa's *Leopard*: a fairly safe choice in view of Lampedusa's unmistakable descent from the realist Stendhal, but still a gesture in the Western direction which Lukacs would not have permitted himself a few years earlier. Similarly, the essay on *Contemporary Realism* (composed in 1955–6, i.e., during the first uncertain "thaw") marks a considerable departure from the rigid posture of the immediate post-war period, when Lukacs "conformed" to the extent of denouncing practically all important Western writers as reactionary war-mongers.⁴ By comparison with the frenetic nonsense Lukacs produced in the closing years of the Stalin era—he was of course under considerable pressure to demonstrate his orthodoxy, but writers have traditionally been required to show some concern for intellectual standards, as well as for their skins—his current manner is fairly detached and at times almost mellow. Thus in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, not

only is there a somewhat grudging attempt to make sense of Kafka, but the criticism of modern music in general, and Schoenberg in particular, is backed by a quotation from the Western "modernist" Theodor Adorno (though objectivity is not carried to the point of informing the reader that Adorno is a Hegelian and a Marxist).

For all these welcome changes in tone and manner, Lukacs' critical assessment of modernism effects no real departure from his previous position. Perhaps that was not to be expected. What is remarkable is that he has not got beyond the simple-minded antithesis realism-decadence which was his theme in the *Destruction of Reason*. Indeed at one point (*Contemporary Realism*, p. 62) he reverts to that monstrous pamphlet for the purpose of acquainting the reader once again with his obsessive notion that the departure from "bourgeois realism" paved the way for a progressive collapse whose stations are marked by the names Dostoyevsky-Nietzsche-Hitler; with Joyce and Kafka relegated to the margin among those writers who—whatever their political views—"connive at that modern nihilism from which both Fascism and Cold War ideology draw their strength." At this level, not only is there no meeting-place for different viewpoints, but the temptation to repay the writer in his own coin becomes overwhelming. After all, we now have it on the best of authorities that Stalin's *univers concentrationnaire* differed from Hitler's chiefly in that the number of his victims was even larger. This may seem irrelevant, but a critic who politicises every issue—to the point of solemnly treating Kafka's nightmares as evidence of "the diabolical character of the world of modern capitalism"—is asking for trouble. The more so when he affects to regard Freud—the greatest representative of the Enlightenment tradition in modern times—as an obscurantist and contrasts him unfavourably with the simpleton Pavlov. If Lukacs really believes this sort of nonsense—it is never quite certain how much of what he says represents actual convictions—one can only conclude that twenty years of Zhdanovism, plus an endless series of accommodations, have permanently impaired his critical faculties.

TWO SEPARATE ASPECTS of this intellectual disaster must be distinguished here. In the first place, Lukacs manifestly has failed to do for East European Marxism what writers like Sartre, Lefebvre, Ernst Bloch, T. W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Italian Marxists of Gramsci's school—not to mention the ex-Marxist group around the New York *Partisan Review*—

⁴Cf. his 700-page diatribe against modern philosophy, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1953) where *inter alia* Bertrand Russell is introduced as an accomplice of both the Pope and the Pentagon.

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have done for the sociology of culture in Western Europe and America. He nowhere reaches their level, and this failure is not due to his Marxism, but to his involvement with Soviet orthodoxy: an orthodoxy rooted in Chernyshevsky and the other founders of the 19th-century Russian Populist school. Secondly, his obstinate refusal to see that "modernism" is a truly international phenomenon compels him to side with Eastern officialdom in opposing the genuinely creative, liberating, and *truly realist* tendencies at work in Soviet and East European life and literature since the "thaw." If he were really what his New Left admirers mistakenly imagine him to be, he would by now have become the patron saint of "revisionism." Actually there is good reason to believe that he is now an isolated figure even in his native Hungary: not because the régime wills it (he is in fact quite free to write and publish, even in the West) but because the younger generation—which until 1956 looked to him for leadership—has turned its back upon him. And no wonder: his attitude to modernism is really no different from that of officialdom, though nowadays expressed in more temperate language. What are young people in Budapest, Prague, or East Berlin to make of a critic who treats "socialist realism" as the only legitimate successor to "bourgeois critical realism"?

There is, of course, a case to be made for the proposition that the socialist movement has inherited the realist strain in bourgeois literature (though even on these grounds Lukacs' persistent denigration of Zola—not a true realist, merely a "naturalist"—makes one wonder whether he is not secretly wedded to Victorian notions of propriety); but a critic who dismisses the whole of modernism as "decadent" shows that he is simply unaware of what is going on around him. If anything is certain, it is that the younger generation in the Soviet orbit is fed up with "socialist realism" and as instinctively "modernist" as its "alienated" counterparts in the West. And what are Western readers to make of Lukacs' curiously old-fashioned insistence that "the contemporary bourgeois writer will have to choose" between Kafka and Thomas Mann? The fact is that neither the writers themselves nor their readers are any longer "bourgeois." They are intellectuals living in an industrial society whose tensions necessarily give rise to problems which modernism undertakes to solve: problems no different from those experienced by people in the Soviet orbit, except that in the West political freedom makes life rather less intolerable. If Lukacs were really trying to bring Marxist

sociology to bear upon this situation, he would realise soon enough that where art is concerned the problem is pretty much the same in East and West. He could then still give vent to his dislike of modernism, but at least he would be relieved of the pseudo-problem he has created for himself by treating it as "bourgeois," when in fact it is one of numerous signs that 19th-century bourgeois culture (the only culture he really understands) is coming to an end.

IT MAY SEEM ODD that the principal intellectual exponent of "socialist realism" should be so obstinately wedded to the tradition of what he himself calls "bourgeois critical realism," but Lukacs has in fact always entertained an anti-naturalist bias and looked to art—specifically literature—for a manifestation of "objective reality." As a youthful neo-Kantian before 1914 he backed this choice with different arguments, some of them bordering on Platonism. In those days⁵ his objection to naturalism was that it was

bound to destroy the form-creating, and therefore life-sustaining, values of the tragic drama. . . . The drama is bound to be trivial when that which is close to life conceals what is dramatically real. . . . The inner style of the drama is realistic in the medieval, scholastic sense, and this excludes every modern realism.

Almost forty years later, in prefacing the essay collection published in English under the title *Studies in European Realism* (1950), he was still pursuing the search for the same form-creating and life-sustaining values, only by now they had been located in history, and Marxism was accepted as the philosophy that enables the writer to understand the meaning of history.

So far so good—at least as regards intellectual consistency. After all, Marxism *did* emerge from German Idealism, and "respect for the classical heritage of humanity in aesthetics" is something Lukacs has in common with Marx. So is the conviction that "this classical heritage consists in the great arts which depict man as a whole in the whole of society." Again it is legitimate—if perhaps a trifle utopian—for a critic to look to socialism as the means of restoring those aesthetic values to which bourgeois society appears to be hostile. This choice too was rooted in the specific experiences of Lukacs' pre-1914 phase when—like other romantic writers—he deplored the prevailing naturalist style which appeared to represent a pseudo-critical accommodation to an ugly environment. From this romantic and aristocratic aestheticism—Lukacs' writings of the period have distinctly Nietzschean overtones—the *salto mortale* into revolutionary Marxism after 1917 was at once difficult and easy: difficult because it required a leap

⁵ Cf. *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin, 1911).

to the other extreme of the anti-bourgeois spectrum; relatively simple because the underlying attitudes did not have to be altered. Bourgeois society was still the enemy, with the difference that Marxism now provided the means of pin-pointing both its decomposition and the persistence of certain progressive features ("bourgeois critical realism" from Goethe and Balzac to Thomas Mann) which could be treated as allies in the increasingly violent struggle against philosophical idealism, subjectivism, nihilism, and their artistic correlative: decadent modernism.

HERE THEN, for all the temporary accommodations to the vagaries of the Party line, there is something like consistency. But there is also tragedy, for in the one respect in which Lukacs has remained true to himself—rejection of naturalism and adherence to the classical heritage—he has failed to establish a position which transcends the usual sectarian quarrels. To do that he would have had to see the modern situation as it really is, and for that his critical apparatus was inadequate. By now, thirty years of apologetics have taken their toll, and the disciples who claim for him the status of "the Marx of aesthetics" merely disclose their own inability to measure the extent of his failure.

Failure on an enormous (though rather anti-heroic) scale, for Lukacs had it in him to apply Marxism to aesthetics at a level adequate to the subject-matter. Though lacking true originality—the notion that in his own sphere he rivals Marx can be entertained only by people who have not read either—he possessed a theoretical equipment superior to that of most Central European scholars of his generation. His range was (and in some respects still is) extraordinary, and his youthful exposure to German intellectualism in its pre-1914 peak period provided an immensely hopeful starting-point: the more so since he was an instinctive cosmopolitan and quite free from the specifically German narrowness. With these antecedents, and equipped with an intellect not indeed very powerful (abstract reasoning was never his *forte*), but subtle, flexible, far-ranging and genuinely critical, he might have achieved something comparable to the attainment of Dilthey and the other great neo-Kantians in the pursuit of what the Germans call *Geistesgeschichte*: a major body of work in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition which could by now have enabled the intelligentsia of East-Central Europe to emancipate itself both from its own provincialism and from the pseudo-universalism of Soviet ideology.



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THE REAL OUTCOME—however impressive the sheer quantitative output, and very occasionally the quality of insight into certain predicaments of 19th-century European society—must be counted among the major *débâcles* of the Hitler-Stalin era: an intellectual catastrophe no less real because its effects are impalpable, and because it relates to a dimension which society has increasingly relegated to the margin of existence. Instead of a genuine critique of modernity in its all forms (including its “ideological reflex” in literary modernism), he has produced a vast corpus of dogmatic writing attuned to a simplified dualism which is already out of date, and which systematically eludes the pressing problems of industrial mass culture in East and West alike; instead of authentic dialectical Marxism, there is blind commitment to the simplified Leninist version; instead of genuine controversy, the stereotyped language of the Cold War. At the age of 78, and after almost sixty years of intensive and far-ranging activity, Georg Lukacs has not merely failed to write the Marxist aesthetics his admirers expected from him: he has failed altogether as a responsible writer, and ultimately as a man. It is one of the worst intellectual disasters of this disastrous age.

Kazin's Contemporaries

Contemporaries. By ALFRED KAZIN. *Secker & Warburg*, 42s.

“I LIKE CRITICISM to be as serious as possible in content, but as personal and idiosyncratic in style as possible—thus reversing the usual academic recipe of the trivial point and the heavy style.” Thus Alfred Kazin, somewhat heavily. But the point is anything but trivial, at a time when the presses disgorge an unprecedented number of critical works which nobody wants to read and which, as often as not, nobody really wanted to write. Mr. Kazin has always stood firm against the high priests of PhDeism, and it is in this context that one must read his constant appeals for spontaneity, for a personal style, for life, great dollops of it. What might otherwise sound self-evident can seem positively refreshing if one comes to it after an hour or two spent burrowing through the dustier academic quarterlies. Mr. Kazin pines for an older, less constrained, more talkative world of literary cafés, pamphlet warfare, recklessly discursive amateurs: “feuilleton” is a magic word for him. A fanciful picture, no doubt; it's all very well to take comfort in the fact that a

Chekhov could cheerfully dash off ephemeral sketches for light-weight magazines, while conveniently forgetting the rank and file, all those morose Gissing characters with sunken cheeks and frayed cuffs stumbling wearily from deadline to deadline. But Mr. Kazin's prejudice is a healthy one. Good scholarship is its own justification, and another matter; but good criticism tends to get written in the heat of the moment. Most of our current rigorous reappraisals or laborious works of elucidation—elucidation *a non lucendo*—are neither one thing nor the other.

Contemporaries is a fat collection of over seventy recent articles: reviews, essays, travel-pieces, introductions to other people's books. The scope of the book is wider than the title suggests: the authors discussed range from Emerson to Sholom Aleichem, from Stendhal to Dylan Thomas. Mr. Kazin is, I think, an excellent literary journalist: nimble, energetic, humane. He would rather get the best out of an author than get the better of him; his aim is to enlarge and exhilarate, and when he dislikes a book he manages to say so without doubling up in paroxysms of rage. Coming across them in magazines, I have enjoyed and been stirred by many of the pieces which he reprints. Yet, though it must sound churlish to say so, the book as a whole left me dissatisfied, a bit despondent even. The table is set, and the banquet is spread out; but confronted with six dozen courses all at once, the guest suddenly finds that he has lost his appetite.

I doubt whether Mr. Kazin has done himself much good by gathering up quite so many fugitives. After all, one reads a book (or should, ideally) more slowly and reflectively than an article, with stiffer demands and greater concentration. There are plenty of striking phrases and fresh insights in *Contemporaries*; but there are also too many awkward attempts to be sprightly—

We were wrong when we thought that the ghost of Henry James had put his too, too careful hand on our young 'uns. . .

too much tired writing—

It is almost nineteen years since a GPU agent put a pick-axe into the brain of Leon Trotsky, and during that period Trotsky's interest for everyone has certainly diminished. . .

too many flat little verdicts which come shooting out like tickets from an Underground machine. Mr. Kazin can highlight Robert Lowell's virtues or give Leslie Fiedler six of the best as well as the next man; but when he has a chance to wind his way into a subject, as he does here with a longish essay on *Moby Dick*, he makes one wish

that now and again he'd let the next man take over the smaller jobs.

If you deal in perishable goods, it's as well to face the fact that they *are* perishable. Yet the best writers manage to have it both ways. Most of the critical works to which I find myself returning are made up of essays which first saw the light in periodicals. Perhaps I'm saying no more than that Kazin, gifted as he is, ultimately lacks the originality and distinction of an Orwell, a Pritchett, a Trilling. But there is something else missing: a compulsive central theme, a fixed view of men and books. Mr. Kazin lends his assent to an author or an idea, but never actually gives it; you always feel that he wants it back, so that he can hurry on to his next review. His final appeal is almost invariably to "life"—not for nothing, going to Russia for the first time, did he imagine that he had been there in a previous existence. Life is a beautiful, inexhaustible word, and we all believe in it, but I think that it should be used sparingly as a rallying cry, if we're not to find ourselves left in mid-air.

No one is more aware of this absence of focus than Kazin himself, and it is to his credit that he has remained an honest fox, instead of trying to turn himself into an artificial hedgehog. Still, one can be too foxy; the best never lack *all* con-

viction, and there is an open-mindedness which springs from tired acquiescence, from a feeling that there are no more battles to be fought. Mr. Kazin, much-travelled man that he is, can sometimes sound very parochial:

Before the hardening pattern of our society set in for good with World War II, men still hoped to change our society, not to escape it.

He is writing about *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and there is a sense, I suppose, in which Hitler and Hiroshima have once and for all made the older, romantic, change-of-heart social philosophies look too dangerous, even to sympathisers. But does the sentence which I have quoted really do much more than reflect a passing mood of conservatism and deadlock among American intellectuals during the Eisenhower era? Or perhaps no more than a change in the literary climate? It is one of Mr. Kazin's merits that he brings literature and history closer together; it is one of his weaknesses that he is prone to identify them with each other. When he writes that "as English schoolboys once learned history from Homer, so American undergraduates now learn it from Eliot and Hemingway and Faulkner," one is tempted to retort that they may be reading good literature, but that they are certainly learning bad history.



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And the notion that social patterns have hardened irrevocably since 1945 would seem laughable in most parts of the world.

On the narrower question of shifting literary tastes, Mr. Kazin is more plausible. His burden is that the revolution has succeeded; yesterday's wild heresy is to-day's militant orthodoxy, and twenty years ago the rebels started turning into classics (or, as he himself puts it, "the Nobel prizes began to roll in"). The only trouble is that, with success, modernism has lost its tang. Mr. Kazin writes as one who was alive in that dawn when Scott and Zelda were jumping into fountains and the mere mention of Eliot or Joyce could raise a scowl in the English Department. Now, quite understandably, he bemoans the speed with which the past can be misunderstood. One of his best essays, written with a controlled anger which has the curious effect of producing an unaccustomed note of gaiety, is about Ezra Pound, and how the whole Pound issue has been sterilised and tidied up by professors so that the good grey poet is ready to take his place among the required reading for freshmen. Pound is an extreme case, but wherever he turns Mr. Kazin seems to see pioneers being parodied or misinterpreted. The new enemies are knowingness and false sophistication.

A melancholy view, with some truth in it and some exaggeration. Why worry so much about the din in the critical parrot-house? Fashions come and go, and in any case their reign is never absolute. One disadvantage of reviewing is that it makes anyone who does it regularly morbidly sensitive to the minute ups and downs of reputation, the slightest trembling of the needle towards Puff or Sneer. Mr. Kazin has been compelled to spend too much of his time sizing up and putting price-tags on "contemporaries"—not that he doesn't do it judiciously. But well before I'd finished reading *Contemporaries* I found myself longing, in a simple Eng. Lit. sort of way, for something that wasn't smart and up-to-date and in-the-swim: a few words on Addison and Steele, perhaps, or *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Although it must be said that when Mr. Kazin does deal with an English author, a contemporary like C. P. Snow or Raymond Williams, he sometimes slips out of touch with his subject-matter. His view of the English character is faintly reminiscent of the late Sir C. Aubrey Smith:

They size up men as coldly as a trainer examining horseflesh, yet their public manner is always careful, starched, externally "correct"—and this, too, is a strength.

Contemporaries is a miscellany, and no review could deal with every item in it without degenerating into a catalogue. Mr. Kazin writes

glowingly about Freud's heroic qualities, for instance, and discusses the Civil War in the tradition of his mentor, Edmund Wilson. Yet anyone who admires *On Native Grounds* or that eloquent memoir, *A Walker in the City*, must wish that, for his own sake, the literary editors would leave Mr. Kazin in peace for a year or two and let him get back to writing full-length books.

John Gross

The Politics of Science Fiction

Fail-Safe. By EUGENE BURDICK and HARVEY WHEELER. *Hutchinson*, 16s.

BY NOW, everyone who is *au courant* with best-sellers knows the theme of *Fail-Safe* by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler: A defective condenser in an "activation machine" that controls the American retaliatory bombing system sets off a nuclear attack against Moscow by a wing of six U.S. bombers. All efforts to recall or destroy them fail. Two get through. Moscow is demolished. To convince Khrushchev this was a genuine error and thus forestall all-out war, the President orders New York demolished.

As science fiction the book is not without merit. Its suspense is sustained and it presents a considerable amount of information, gleaned from civilian writings on thermonuclear war, that will convey to the unwary reader a semblance of plausibility. It is also better written than Peter Bryant's *Red Alert*, published in 1958, which, while based on a different type of accident, contains an amazing number of similar details, including the possible death swap of cities. (If Burdick and Wheeler do not owe a debt of acknowledgement to Bryant, the index of coincidental plot detail in science fiction must be high.)

But *Fail-Safe* is not merely a piece of science fiction. It is an emotionally surcharged political tract designed to prove that the greatest danger to the survival of free institutions in the world to-day is the Western defence system. In their preface, the authors seriously claim that they are not really writing fiction but are relating a "true" story; accidental nuclear war may not come as a result of a faulty condenser, but "ultimately it will occur." Or, as Burdick put it in an interview with Norman Cousins, an acci-

dent of the kind described is "inevitable." The danger of accidental war, he also maintained, in a telecast, is "critical."¹ To the extent that this is believed, it is certain to encourage the appeasement of Nikita Khrushchev, portrayed by the authors as a man of noble character and profound thought.

Of course, the peripheral psychological or political consequences of a position have no bearing upon the question of its truth. The truth may hurt, but that does not make it less true. On the other hand, a position which ignores or scorns the truth, whether it be that of science or of history, is unworthy of responsible men. Let us therefore examine the situation described by the authors in the light of this criterion.

TO BEGIN WITH, I wish to state as emphatically as I can that no system devised by man can ever be mechanically foolproof. We shall never build a machine which we can logically prove will never fail. Nor can we logically prove that it is impossible for any particular man suddenly to become insane. But to assume, as the authors do, that a failure in a single computer can lead to an unauthorised nuclear attack, that the failure cannot be traced to its sources and identified for several hours, that multiple efforts to recall the flight crews or abort their machines are unsuccessful, that two bombers can penetrate the entire system of Soviet defence—to assume all this is to compound a series of unrelated improbabilities to the point where they transcend the sober limits of scientific credibility.

One can devise a great number of systems capable of reporting instantly the malfunction of any machine. Even the most primitive methods, such as using two machines that cross check each other, go a long way towards eliminating the type of mistake around which the book is built. Perhaps this is why the authors do not clearly explain what triggered off the attack, although one is left with the distinct impression it is a small condenser in a single machine. In the story, the machine that breaks down is one of six; and it is perfectly feasible to set up six machines so that a malfunction in any one of them will be registered and checked with the speed of an electric impulse by the other five. As for all of them breaking down at the same time—on the assumption that one can assign probabilities to such things—whatever the probability is of any one of them going haywire, it must be

¹ *The Times* (London), 14 March: "If the facts here presented are correct (and one has no reason to suppose otherwise) just such an irreparable disaster might happen tomorrow..."

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multiplied by the relatively independent probability of all the others acting the same way simultaneously.

Furthermore, according to this "true" story, once American bombers reach the "fail-safe" point at which they must return or go on, if a red bulb lights up at the top of the Fail-Safe Box and is accompanied by a coded message, this is the signal for attack. But the authors' contention that a go-ahead order and coded message can be transmitted because of a condenser becoming defective is absurd. In fact, any failure in the communications system would automatically prevent the sending of such a message. And the standing orders in the control procedures of the U.S. Government are that unless a bomber at the fail-safe point receives a positive command to attack from the highest American authority, it must automatically return.

Consequently, in the improbable event that the *kind* of accident Burdick and Wheeler believe is certain to happen did occur, the bombers would actually turn back. The only result a communications breakdown could have, in other words, would be to prevent the American forces from making a retaliatory attack even if the President wanted to order them on. This fact is of enormous significance both technically and politically. For the existing defence control procedures show that, far from being trigger-happy or indifferent to the possibility of accident, U.S. cautions have been developed to a point where there is far more justification for believing there are too many safeguards, rather than too few. The American Government rightly prefers to assume that risk. One would imagine that a "truthful" piece of science fiction would at least take cognisance of this.

There is a certain awkwardness about discussing the probability or improbability of unique events because it is difficult to place estimates upon them. In the case of a series of events where a certain proportion has a particular property called accidental, we can calculate the probability of the next event being an accident, or of the proportion of accidents in the future series. But when we are dealing with an event which has *never* happened, although we cannot declare it impossible, we cannot give a numerical estimate to the chances of its occurring. On the basis of certain theoretical assumptions one can only say that this is low or high.

AT ANY RATE, the probability of a mechanical failure in the defence system can be held and is now being held at so low a level that no accurate estimate of the probability of failure can be made. We do know, from Defence

Secretary McNamara, that U.S. planes around the world were readied for possible action during one of the days when the Soviets seemed about to move militarily against West Berlin, and within seconds after Moscow's intentions became clear they were alerted to stand down.

The Burdick and Wheeler view that full-scale accidental nuclear war as a result of a mechanical failure is "inevitable" is therefore intellectually scandalous. It is based on the elementary error of assuming that because something is not impossible, it is highly probable, if not certain. It overlooks the fact that we are not dealing with an indeterminately large slice of time, that improvements in the safeguards against accident are continually being made, and that the existence of the balance of nuclear terror is more likely to lead to peace through multilateral disarmament than if the U.S. were to disarm unilaterally out of fear that a mechanical accident will set off war.

What escapes the authors is that the *main* danger of accidental war, to the extent that it is a danger and not an abstract possibility, is the occurrence of the unforeseen in the behaviour of men. (Here *Red Alert* is by far the more intelligent book.) Everyone knows that in many situations our tools and machines fail us less often than human beings. This is not to express a hope that humans will behave like machines, or a preference for machines over people, but simply a desire to rely on machines and not merely human beings in certain areas of experience where a mistake may prove disastrous.

FAIL-SAFE IS ALSO morally objectionable because of the colours in which it portrays the civilian experts on how to defend a free society against war, and how to survive war if it is forced on us. Herman Kahn is the obvious prototype of Groteschele, who comes nearest to being the villain of the piece. Groteschele is a Jew, an outsider to the Establishment who makes good by virtue of his cleverness and ruthlessness. He is power-hungry, loves money more than women, is interested in his own career, and is indifferent to the welfare of mankind. At heart he is a sadist. When the evidence flashes on the screen that the six bombers have flown irrevocably to their fatal mission, the authors tell us that for a moment Groteschele drops the mask. His eyes flutter, he shudders, and to General Black, the hero of the book who has no use for Groteschele, the expression on the latter's face "seemed composed of apprehension, excitement, delight, and opportunity."

When word is received that New York is to be destroyed to convince Khrushchev that an error had been made, it is clear that the world



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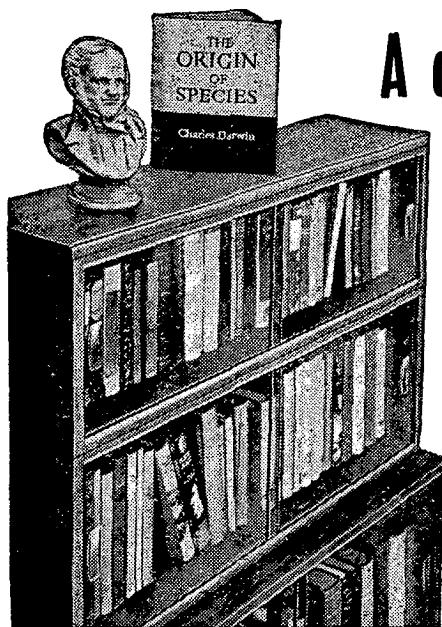
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will now disarm and that there will be no market for experts on thermonuclear war:

Groteschele when he first heard the President's words thought first of his family, but only briefly. . . . Then having done his duty towards his family, Groteschele thought of his future. . . . Surely the great powers would disarm to a point below the level where such an accident could be repeated. For a moment he felt a pang of theoretical regret. He really would have liked to see the thermonuclear war fought out along the lines he had debated, expounded and contemplated.

Then Groteschele swung his attention to what his future work would be. If there were drastic cutbacks in military expenditures many businesses would be seriously affected. . . . A man who understood government and big political movements could make a comfortable living advising the threatened industries. It was a sound idea and Groteschele tucked it away in his mind with a sense of reassurance.

These are the thoughts which are supposed to run through the minds of advisers to the U.S. Government when 15 million people are about to be incinerated. By describing them as money-hungry monsters, their entire intellectual activity in behalf of a free society is called into question. The sober truth is that there is less

money in advising the U.S. Government or working for RAND Corporation than in writing sensational hysteria-mongering science fiction.

Even worse than this legally privileged libel is the character of the argument Burdick and Wheeler put into the mouth of their Kahn caricature. Most of what they know about the balance of terror and the complexities of defence against an ideologically fanatical opponent they have learned from Kahn and men like him. They cannot therefore be unaware of Kahn's position. Nonetheless, they attribute to Groteschele the view that the control system is "perfect," "foolproof," that "the chance of war by mechanical failure is next to zero." In all literature on the subject I have read, and not Kahn's writings alone, I have never come across this assertion. The contrary absurdity that war by mechanical failure is inevitable—the authors' own view—is much more common. Kahn himself, on the basis of the alarm system *which existed a few years ago*, warned of the dangers of accident. Largely as a result of his and other analyses, the system of safeguards has been improved to the point where, according to good authority, there is serious doubt whether contracts for research on "How Accidental Wars Can Start" are likely to be fruitful. This does *not* mean that the system is perfect.

Sociology at the Crossroads

AND OTHER ESSAYS

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THE POLITICAL HEART of the book is the portrait of Khrushchev. Had the authors created an imaginary statesman from an imaginary country, it would be wrong to hold them to account for their interpretation. Within the bounds of psychological plausibility, any character creation in fiction is aesthetically legitimate. When we are dealing with an historical personage, however, even in science fiction the relevant facts must exercise some veto on the treatment. The authors present Khrushchev as a man of tragic dimensions, more sinned against than sinning, reluctant to demand a cruel and gratuitous price for an accident which he agrees is no one's fault, a humanist and a reflective critic of Bolshevik Leninism. In the climactic scene Khrushchev says: "At some point in the last ten years we went beyond rationality in politics. We became prisoners of our machines, our suspicions, and our belief in logic." He leaves the stage a philosopher pledged to reasonable compromise. In this idealisation, no one will recognise the Khrushchev who served as Stalin's gang boss, who gave the orders for the execution of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters, the construction of the Berlin Wall and other indignities.

But if on the basis of past Communist action and current theory one were to predict Khrushchev's behaviour in a situation like that envisaged by the authors, it would be far different

from what they describe. Khrushchev would most probably do one of two things. If the situation showed that all U.S. supporting planes had been withdrawn from the skies, that no ICBMs had been mounted for delivery and no alarm sounded (the measures the U.S. President adopted to convince the Soviet ruler that an error had been made), Khrushchev would probably move against Western Europe—trading Moscow for the hegemony of all Europe, and banking on the unwillingness of the United States to destroy the people of Western Europe. At the same time, Khrushchev might demand that the U.S. pay the costs of reconstructing Moscow, and that a government sympathetic to the U.S.S.R. be entrusted with the destinies of the American nation. Because of guilt feelings about what “no one is responsible for,” he probably would get away with the occupation of Western Europe and a huge indemnity.

If, however, U.S. second-strike forces remained in readiness in the event of such an accident, and the President indicated that we would help reconstruction of Moscow but would not countenance aggressive action against Western Europe, it is highly unlikely that Khrushchev would give the signal to attack. Attack would mean destruction—and no Bolshevik will risk survival in a war he is not convinced he can win. The Communist régime will not initiate an all-out nuclear war unless it feels assured that it can survive.

Finally, the degree of political stupidity the authors attribute to the Americans is illustrated by the key incident in which the airmen, just before they reach Moscow, hear the voice of the President urging them to return to their bases and explaining that an error had been made. Naturally, the airmen conclude that this is an enemy ruse. The President's voice is so easy to mimic and they have been warned against precisely that trick. But even Americans are intelligent enough in such a situation to send the appeal in the voice of someone the Russians could not mimic, for example, the authentic voice of an airman's wife or friend giving information the Russians could not possibly have.

THERE WAS A TIME when the themes of science fiction in novel and cinema were pure fantasies. To-day a new genre has developed which prides itself on its concern with important and grim truths underlying the fictional detail. This pretension exacts a correspondingly great intellectual and moral responsibility to avoid fomenting hysteria. Intelligent fear may be a preface to appropriate action, but hysterical fear blinds one to alternatives. It would be commonly admitted that it is cruel to write a piece of science fiction or produce a film which, by dis-

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torting the facts, scares people witless about the incidence of some dread disease, thus making them gullible to fraudulent claims of cure. It is far worse to exaggerate the risks involved in the defence of freedom to a degree that dwarfs in the minds of readers and viewers the much greater and more immediate danger confronting a free and peaceful world.

Sidney Hook

New (Translated) Novels

The Bluebottle. By IVAN VALERIY. Translated from the Russian by THOMAS JONES. **Red and Black.** Translated by DAVID ALGER. *Collins and Harvill Press*, 16s.

Cinnamon Shops and Other Stories. By BRUNO SCHULZ. Translated from the Polish by CELINA WIENIEWSKA. *Macgibbon & Kee*, 18s.

Explosion in a Cathedral. By ALEJO CARPENTIER. Translated by JOHN STURROCK. *Gollancz*, 21s.

The Slave. By ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER. Translated from the Yiddish by the author and CECIL HEMLEY. *Secker & Warburg*, 21s.

The Gates of Paradise. By GEORGE ANDRZEJEVSKI. Translated from the Polish by JAMES KIRKUP. *Weidenfeld & Nicolson*, 16s.

ALL THESE TRANSLATORS have done their work excellently. If that sounds like getting the National Anthem over at the beginning of the performance, I will single out Celina Wieniewska, because I should think that Bruno Schulz's painter's Polish, which has transmuted a world of visual objects into words, was more difficult than most.

The level of translation rises annually. So does the level of fiction-craft. In the latter case it may be only an inch a year like the waters round the Royal Palace at Stockholm: but soon the great polished expanse will have engulfed all the landmarks. Perversely one will wish that somebody would snatch a grace beyond the reach of art or even fall flat on his face while trying to do so.

Out of all these, Ivan Valeriy's *The Bluebottle*

is the only one that strikes me as "amateur"—in this complimentary and admirable sense. This may be partly because one of his masters is Sterne (who can be held responsible for a rather tiresomely prolonged piece of speculative posturing at some gentle reader, before the first of the two stories gets under way).

A Soviet Professor of Philosophy, here surprisingly known as John Bluefly, strikes a pestering bluebottle in anger, and suffers a Jainist kind of guilt, unable to feel sure whom he may hit next. This incident precipitates a psychological crisis which has long been brewing in his relations, not only with the Party but with his essentially vulgar wife, Evlalia. His punishment for deviationism is that his book is refused publication and he is exiled to the bureaucratic deserts of the housing department, which gives opportunity for ironic social description. Naturally one is interested in the political and social criticism which this book indicates, but I am more impressed that it is both Russian and human, Russian in its kind of humour and pathos, human because it is about life, happiness, and death. The carelessly slaughtered bluebottle is one of us mortals (too many of us).

THE SECOND STORY, *Red and Black*, is about a Professor of French literature who is disenchanted with life, as well as with the State and the Party, and cannot be saved from despair and ultimate suicide by his passion for his much younger wife, Rimma. This story too is about death, the ill that Communism cannot cure, but it is a more complex web of suggestions and implications than the first. It suggests among other things that Professor Cornelius Apricot (these names!) may have known more about Stendhal than about life and wives. On the other hand, Cornelius, in dying, is a kind of scapegoat taking away Rimma's sin of immaturity: *now* she begins to understand him. His Communist friends are left feeling that they failed him, because, ironically, they had not been able to make him feel the Communist contempt for death: they ought to have had the answer about mortality too.

It is strange perhaps that Ivan Valeriy* is the only one of this set who has given me all the time the sense of "real people." The runner-up is Bruno Schulz. This sense of the real does not arise merely because his stories are based on his actual family or because, in the symbolism of the *Cinnamon Shops*, they describe "an old dignity" changing "into something brash, second-rate, questionable..." More and more it seems to me that "real people" in fiction are the same as those rare improbable beings whom we do at last get to know in life. Far from

* *Ed. Note.*—This is the pen-name of a Russian writer—Valeriy Tarsis—who was recently reported "detained for mental illness": the third case in this new form of Soviet censorship.

being "like" what we expect or think we "know," they are unlike everyone on earth except themselves. Schulz's monstrous father fills the house with his monstrous growth towards death. All this involves a monstrous convulsion in all the kingdoms: birds, dogs, cockroaches, furniture, winds, and tailors' dummies begin to live for themselves and to get out of hand. But the father and the other characters are often as insanely real as any of our grandfathers, aunts, and uncles, seen by the childish or innocent eye.

Mainly it is a painter's eye: even, I must say, a house-painter's eye, because Schulz can put on the visual effects with a spray-gun. This results in some wonderful dramatisation of inanimate or non-human nature (the Great Gale, for instance). The method is animistic, and a human being is just one oddity in the great world of odd beasts, plants, and things. I wonder if imaginative knowledge of the human animal is likely to turn more and more to the eccentric if it is to be convincing?

IN THE REMAINDER of these novels, whatever their merits, there is only the blueprint of personality. Is it entirely coincidental that all three of them can anyway roughly be classified as "historical"? A writer might be driven either into the past or into the future because of the difficulties of making characters appear at once contemporary and convincing. One of his difficulties might be: whom do I have to convince? Alejo Carpentier's *Explosion in a Cathedral* is a remarkable and enjoyable *tour de force*, and his re-creation of a Caribbean world at the time of the French Revolution and its naval wars, is even gripping. But his imaginary characters—his family of rich Havana orphans—seem to me to be conventional-fictional and hence to belong nowhere particular in time or space. One of them, Esteban, holds the story together by his involvement with Victor Hugues, the terrorist, who became Commissar in Guadeloupe and organised privateering to finance the local Revolution. Victor, who is biographical, is much more all there and illogically real: life *is* not only stranger than fiction, but often better at it.

Esteban's chief function seems to be to show you what Carpentier thinks about essential disillusion after the blissful dawn and the inevitable degeneration of idealism. This is often a good, even exciting, adventure story but since the author is not primarily interested in people, the moral and psychological significance is at about the level of a kind of "black" Boy's Own Paper—a clean wind of piracy plus some rather less hygienic sex (all very virile and modern). What really interests Carpentier is Things, an "existentialist" taste common in Spanish-American poetry. Beginning with the warehouse in

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ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER's *The Slave* is set in 17th-century Poland. His hero, Jacob, a strict and pious Judaic scholar, has been sold into slavery as a result of Cossack attacks on the Jewish communities, and is working as a cowherd among some poor and bestially primitive villagers. Wanda, daughter of his master, falls in love with him and protects him, and eventually against his Judaic principles he consorts with her and, after ransom, comes back to fetch and marry her, passing her off, as she is not orthodox, as a mute. This subterfuge, not surprisingly, breaks down while she is giving birth to their son, and Jacob is obliged to flee from her and his own people. I confess that I do not feel quite sure how seriously we are supposed to take Jacob and his story. It is a quite good story (one quote says Mr. Singer is "bardic")—but psychologically juvenile as historical novels often are, like Scott. In fact it causes in me the malaise about the historical to which I have just referred. As a paradoxical history of psychological Judaism it would have to be satirical.

And maybe it is: "Investigations of the cabala since his return had uncovered the doctrine that all lust is of divine origin." Or—Jacob "would not lie with [Wanda] immediately but first told her stories of upright [*sic*] men and women. . . . Lying with Jacob was for her a foretaste of Paradise."

ALL TRANSLATIONS of novels may be in the situation of the "historical" if they describe an enclosed foreign world (nowadays more and more unlikely). And these books have made me wonder what is the real imaginative advantage of using a remote place or time. Surely in the main it should be to frame and isolate the undifferentiatedly human and the perennially moving? This one seldom finds. I cannot say I find it in George Andrzejewski's *The Gates of Paradise* which is about the "Children's Crusade." The children, mostly teen-agers, are much more concerned with carnal than with spiritual love, and much more with homosexual than with heterosexual. This may well be true: but it is put across with a false lyricism which I find objectionable. Here again the "historicism" seems to be an excuse for dodging authenticity. And it is all written in a single sentence, a "remarkable" and "audacious" technical feat. If it were true, it would drive you mad. Fortunately there are cheating commas and semicolons (pp. 13 and 24 if nowhere else).

Kathleen Nott

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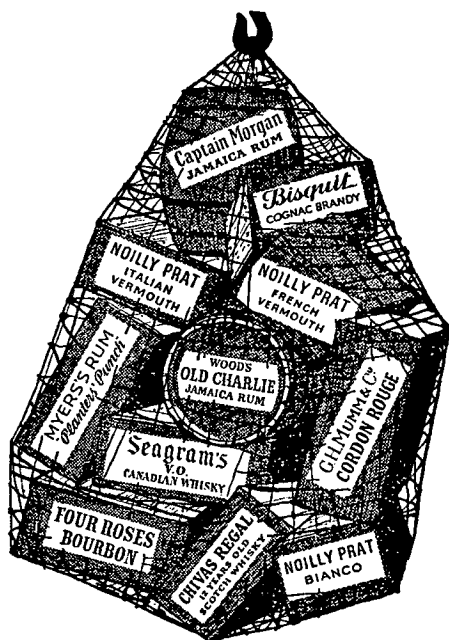
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LETTERS

Nietzsche

MR. MICHAEL HAMBURGER's piece on "Nietzsche and the Nietzscheans" [ENCOUNTER, October, 1962] is inadequate both from a scholar's and from a critic's point of view. To begin with his final evaluation of Nietzsche, a passage he cites from Nietzsche comes to mind: "In my case, too, the Germans will do all they can to make an immense destiny give birth to a mouse." After some German philosophers have emasculated Nietzsche's thought in various ingenious ways, a few scholars are trying to foist on us an even duller image: "If Nietzsche's importance should ever be doubted, we have only to turn to his early polemical works, the *Thoughts out of Season*," says Hamburger, who prefers the "young classical scholar" and "the young professor" to "the lonely thinker." This is rather like basing Shakespeare's claim to fame on the works he wrote before 1600.

Hamburger's alternative of considering *Zarathustra* as either "Nietzsche's masterpiece" or "an aberration and monstrosity" is far from exhaustive. Having translated the book along with three other late works and a comprehensive selection from the other works, notes, and letters, I am certainly aware of what in my preface I called its "gross unevenness." But "despite the all-too-human self-pity and occasional bathos, the book is full of fascinating ideas; and probably it owes its unique success with the broad masses of readers not least to its worst qualities." (For an attempt to defend a detailed estimate, see *The Portable Nietzsche*, The Viking Press, 1954; paperback edition, 1958). The great aphoristic books that immediately preceded *Zarathustra* belong with the greatest treasures of German literature. The growing shrillness of the late works may be regrettable, or perhaps tragic, yet philosophically they are above comparison with the essays Hamburger prefers.

Hamburger assumes that Nietzsche's ideas can be largely explained by saying that he was in revolt against Naumburg (the small town in which his family lived); also that Nietzsche's thought is characterised by constant self-contradiction. Having attempted a painstaking refutation of both assumptions in my *Nietzsche* (1950; paperback ed., 1956), I wish he had given grounds for rejecting my demonstration instead of altogether ignoring my work and devoting easily the first half of his essay to presenting as new discoveries points I had made years ago.

One naturally hesitates to complain in such cases because one is almost bound to sound peevish. When Penguin Books in 1961 published a translation of *Zarathustra* that claimed to be revolutionary by having done away with unwarranted archaisms, etc., etc., I therefore thought it better not to point out in print that Penguin Books had previously requested permission to publish my translation,

which had effected this revolution seven years earlier, nor did I catalogue what *The New Yorker* might call "Funny Coincidences." While I found it hard to credit that all of this should be due merely to the *Zeitgeist*, a polemic could only have centred attention on two translators, and that would have been pointless. But in the present case two substantial points are involved.

First, Hamburger says almost at the outset: "The precise way in which Nietzsche's works have been exploited, distorted, and deliberately falsified is only now being revealed to the general public in Germany, though it has long been suspected by some, and known to other, specialists." Far from having merely been suspected by and known to specialists, this information was read by about 100,000 people in the two volumes mentioned and in my *The Owl and the Nightingale* (the U.S. paperback ed. is called *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*); and it was also available in my article on Nietzsche in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, not to speak of other encyclopedias. When Hamburger says, "the recent controversy may not yet amount to a transvaluation of Nietzsche, but even its asperity is a healthy sign after the pieties of the myth-makers," he himself fails as an intellectual historian. If things long known about Nietzsche in the English-speaking world should suddenly be news in Germany, that might have been noted in such a long piece on the reception of Nietzsche.

Secondly, this piece with its many footnotes and citations purports to be scholarly; but advances in scholarship often depend on awareness of previous work. When Hamburger gives later writers credit for what I said earlier, this matters far less than when he gets half-wrong, again and again and again, what I tried hard to get straight. Short of repeating at length what I have written before (or remaining silent once again, which would be the obvious course if his essay had appeared in a less important place), I must call attention to my own work, though this is embarrassing.

In a recent book, *Twenty German Poets*, I respectfully lampooned Hamburger's readings of Heine and Trakl. There are a few authors for whom he lacks ears, and Nietzsche is evidently one of these. Confronted with brilliantly ironic passages in Heine and Nietzsche, we are offered utterly flat and humourless misinterpretations. The dull image of Nietzsche that Hamburger, following many others, offers us, is—in the words of his own final phrase—"a reflection not on Nietzsche, but on them."

WALTER KAUFMANN

Princeton University

I AM SORRY that I was unable to deal with Professor Kaufmann's writings on Nietzsche, as I was unable to deal with those of Heidegger or Jaspers, for instance; but Professor Kaufmann greatly exaggerates the scope and scale of my article. Surely he must know that a scholarly article of that length would have been confined to a single textual or critical issue, and that a comprehensive study of Nietzsche's thought—let alone of other people's interpretations of it—would have called for ten times the length at least.

Brevity, too, must be to blame for Professor Kaufmann's misunderstanding of my remarks on Nietzsche's early works. The mere fact that all my Nietzsche quotations were from later works might have suggested to him that I had no intention of substituting the "young classical scholar" for the "lonely thinker." The operative words in the sentence are, "If Nietzsche's importance should ever be doubted"; and they were intended to indicate the point where English readers who are repelled by the tone of *Zarathustra* would find it easier to come to terms with Nietzsche and convince themselves that *all* Nietzsche's works are worth a struggle. Despite the wide circulation of Professor Kaufmann's books in America, I believe I was right to assume that the majority of *ENCOUNTER's* English readers know no work of Nietzsche's other than *Zarathustra*; and I should think that a good many of these readers find it as difficult as I do to concede greatness to any writer who insists so much on his own importance. Yet Nietzsche was a great writer and a great man, and anyone who has read such early writings as *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thoughts out of Season* will be very much readier to make allowances for the morbid excesses of the later works. Incidentally, my reference to the early works—and to their anticipation of the later thought—also served to counterpoise my emphasis on Nietzsche's inner tensions, self-contradictions, and antinomies.

The first half of my article was not devoted to "presenting as new discoveries points" which Professor Kaufmann "had made years ago," but to informing the reader of recent Nietzsche controversies in Germany. My "footnotes and citations" served the same simple and obvious purpose.

Since I haven't seen Professor Kaufmann's lampoons on my "misinterpretations" of other writers, I can't comment on them, but can only wonder why he should have been moved to drag them into this context. If my (Nietzschean) psychology is reliable, it may comfort him to know that the book he has lampooned is unknown to all but a tiny fraction of his 100,000 readers.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

Reading University

The Habsburg Monarchy

ENGLISH historians are really unpredictable. In 1961 A. J. P. Taylor surprised the world by presenting Hitler just as an ordinary statesman though perhaps a bit wild. In 1962 Edward Crankshaw started to deplore the demise of the Habsburg Monarchy, and he did it, while praising Mr. Zeman's excellent book which proves that Austria-Hungary could not live a day after suffering defeat together with Germany. It is not correct that the Habsburgs had to go "because the nations over which they ruled rose up in wrath against them." They had to go because nobody wanted them to stay and they had lost the possibility to enforce their will. One can agree that it would have been better to keep Austria-Hungary together and to transform it from within, but who should have

done it? It is a pity that Mr. Crankshaw is not aware of the brilliant discussions on the subject between Karl Renner and Otto Bauer in the Vienna monthly *Der Kampf* of 1918. Showing superb ability to defend his case, Renner developed one reason after another for the basic reforms making Austria-Hungary both a viable and a democratic configuration. All his arguments were correct, but they could no longer exert any influence. Mr. Crankshaw is mistaken in believing that the overwhelming majority of Austria-Hungary's inhabitants wanted the Monarchy to continue in 1914; the overwhelming majority was indifferent to the fate of the state. This indifference changed to hostility when it became clear that a victory of the Central Powers would mean the strengthening of the rule of the German minority over the non-German majority in Austria. (This important aspect is sadly neglected by Mr. Zeman.) But neither Masaryk-Benes nor Pasic nor Paderewski were the Monarch's grave-diggers. The Habsburgs alone by their inability to adapt themselves to modern conditions dug their grave. When they went, nobody had the power to keep a community together which in the eyes of their inhabitants was nothing but an appendix to a nationalistic Germany.

By the way, Masaryk did not invent "a polyglot Czechoslovakia to be ruled by Czechs" (his ideas were quite different), nor did Benes ever say "Better Hitler than Habsburg."

J. W. BRUEGEL

London

How to reply to Mr. Bruegel? He says that in my review of Mr. Zeman's book I deplored the end of the Habsburgs. I did nothing of the kind: all I deplored was that so much nonsense had been written about it (not by Mr. Zeman). He then contrives to suggest, no doubt inadvertently, that I believe the Habsburgs had to go because the subject nations rose against them: most of my review was devoted to saying that this was not so. He goes on to express views of his own, with some of which I happen to agree, though I did not touch on them in the article in question. He tells me I have not read Renner and Bauer: I have. He finishes with two unsupported denials to which I return an unsupported contradiction.

EDWARD CRANKSHAW

Sandhurst, Kent

Mailer and Trilling

MRS. TRILLING is only as fair to Norman Mailer [*ENCOUNTER*, November, 1962] as her own political commitment allows her to be. She shares with most liberal critics the assumption that only forms of government are "totalitarian" or "Fascist." Mailer and a good many socialists see the diffusion of non-delegated power in Western democracies on a contractual basis as equally sinister. John Stuart Mill said that no one was at liberty to sell his own liberty: we apparently do not agree. A union can sell the rule-book: with individuals the asking-

Life & Letters Today

Bonn

FAMILY MINISTER Bruno Heck, who accompanied Dr. Adenauer to General de Gaulle, said all German schoolchildren will be given the chance to learn French. Mr. Heck indicated that government rules making English the No. 1 foreign language in West German schools will be dropped in 1965.

N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

Washington

DISTRIBUTORS of paperbacks offer their wares with the disinterested zeal of a supermarket vending rival brands of frozen succotash. "Read the books?" a distributor once said to me, "Hell, no! It's always a defence in an obscenity case if you haven't read the books."

NEW STATESMAN

New York

WITH ENGAGING candour Anthony Sampson admits that he had to write *Anatomy of Britain* "at high speed" in order that the beginning should not be found out of date before the end could be nailed down. That sense in an Englishman of having to run at full tilt to keep up with the times seems to an American even sadder evidence of the Americanisation of Britain than mass advertising or bowling alleys.

N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE

Paris

WHEN A French evening paper looking around for a snappy headline for a political report borrows from one of these new "anti-novelists," as "*Paris-Presse*" did the other night (TOGLIATTI ACCUSES CHINESE OF PLAYING "MARIENBAD") one can safely say that they are beginning to be accepted even in the popular mind.

GUARDIAN

Lagos

IN THE NIGERIAN PRESS some criticism was levelled at audiences for greeting a British company's Macbeth with laughter, a reaction which is probably explicable by the alien method of portraying suffering. To an African audience, it was suggested by a Nigerian university professor, the sight of a man weeping was amusing rather than deeply moving.

THE TIMES

New Delhi

FOUR of the 700 members of Parliament present to hear President Sarvepali Radhakrishnan inaugurate a new session to-day walked out in protest against the President's speaking in English. The four who walked out were Socialists. They demanded that the speech be read first in Hindi. President Radhakrishnan, who comes from the Tamil-speaking people in Southern India, cannot speak Hindi.

NEW YORK TIMES

London

A PANEL of speakers assembled on the stage of the Royal Court last night for a discussion darkly entitled "Who Alienated Konstantin Stanislavsky?"—a question that was never cleared up, but which gave rise to a good many penetrating statements on the present state of acting. . . . Mr. Kenneth Tynan asked whether it was not true that all great acting ensembles were based on Socialist principles; and Mr. Steven Vinaver declared that any genuine style must take account of the bomb. The voice from the gallery then declared that if anyone in the audience really wanted to see a Tory play they would find two running currently in Moscow.

THE TIMES

London

A WORKHOUSE at Barham, near Ipswich, thought to have been the inspiration of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, is to be pulled down.

DAILY MAIL

Albany, Georgia

THE formerly all-white public library here re-opened for the first time in seven months to-day on a stand-up desegregated basis. The library board voted last week to re-open the white and Negro libraries on a non-racial basis but ordered all tables and chairs removed.

N.Y. TIMES

Rabat

A MAJOR PROBLEM for the U.S. Peace Corps in French-speaking Africa is the widespread misunderstanding as to what the programme is all about. Many Moroccans believe it is another religious group similar to the Quakers or Moral Rearmament. The trouble is in the title, according to one Moroccan official. "The French translations Corps de la Paix or Volontaires de la Paix sound like the Salvation Army," he said, "and Africa is tired of missionaries and charity."

NEW YORK TIMES

London

ENCOUNTER contains a twelve-page article on British attitudes during the Cuban crisis, signed by "Reporter." As almost the only analysis of its kind, this article is to be welcomed. In so far as it criticises those in Britain who underestimated the Soviet build-up in Cuba, the ENCOUNTER article has much to commend it. There is a very great danger of assuming that the Soviet Union is exclusively for peace. While it is clearly of crucial importance to understand the strands of thought in the Soviet world, it must be recognised that the Soviet Union does represent a real threat. . . . There is a danger in over-stressing the peaceableness of Russia's intentions. . . . There is not space here to refute all the article's assertions about the peace movement, but we do feel that as a whole it is profoundly indicative of a disturbing mode of thought.

PEACE NEWS

price is usually to designate two or three inferiors. Whether you call it status or power the price is the same. When large concentrations of power exist outside the democratic process it does not much matter whether the government is democratic or what Mrs. Trilling calls "totalitarian."

In the current cant two "postures" are possible. The first is to repudiate every form of non-delegated power. This is the burden of Mailer's first hell-fire sermon. But political and public action is obviously not likely to be very effective against a menace which in its very essence is private and contractual. For the individual the only course is to accept power but repudiate the contract. This is what the Hipster does. Where human relationships are expressed in terms of power he exercises power without relationship. He takes the goods but doesn't pay the price in submission. Where the social currency is power he prints his own money. The result, one might hope, will be devaluation.

There is therefore no contradiction, as Mrs. Trilling alleges, between Mailer's early and late positions. *The Naked and the Dead* repudiates the coin; *The White Negro* rejects the contract. Two sides of the same medal: corporate action and individual action. Surely every respectable moral position must have both?

JOHN BRICKWOOD

Eynsford, Kent

"Pushkin and Gannibal"

ALTHOUGH I am but an unknown and perhaps humourless reader from Greenwich Village, could you suffer me to add a word to Dwight Macdonald's letter on Vladimir Nabokov's "Pushkin and Gannibal" (ENCOUNTER, September).

Surely you and Mr. Nabokov were unfair to Mr. Macdonald. Neither of you met his point that the almost indecipherable paper on the Russian poet departed from the *Lolita* tradition. But what does it matter? There is more than one way to take readers for a long ride, and few journeys can emulate Humbert Humbert's cross-country trip. Far from departing from the Nabokovian spirit, "Pushkin and Gannibal"—which was obviously a spoof—seems just the kind of paper that Mr. Macdonald's hypothetical Cornell student might have submitted to Professor Pnin, and with it warmed his heart.

If ENCOUNTER had not printed Mr. Nabokov's acute historical analysis, I can certify that the (Greenwich) *Village Voice* would have.

Faculty of Law
New York University

NORMAN DORSEN

Pugwash: Deep Water

AS AN ENGLISH language word, *Pugwash* is "absurd," as you suggest; as a corruption of the Indian word, or phrase, meaning "Deep Water," I think it is not.

Toronto, Canada

MURIEL DUGGAN

Little Magazines

IT WOULD BE a pity if Peter Levi was allowed to get away with his skimmed and misleading article on little magazines (ENCOUNTER, February). What bookshops did he visit, I wonder, in his search for material? He has heard of Matthew Mead but not, it appears, of his magazine *Satis* which provided—until it folded the other month—just that form for experimental poetry Levi misses. And what of Michael Horovitz' uncompromisingly *avant-garde* *New Departures*? Has he never seen an issue of *Migrant* or one of its recent pamphlets, say on Soviet Bloc poetry? (Before Evtushenko was on all our lips.) Has he ever heard of Ian Finlay who produces a fascinating international poetry broadsheet every month from Edinburgh? And, since Peter Levi uses so much of his space discussing criticism, why ignore the theatre's *Encore* which must be one of the most successful and widely read of all the little magazines? Of the smaller productions (how small is a small magazine?) there are *Ambit*, *Outburst*, *Mica*, and the staid but highly successful poetry quarterly *Envoi*. What of the new arrival *Icarus*? And *20th Century*? And why brush *Stand* aside so patronisingly—it has, despite its "provincial Englishness," printed Beckett in French. The omissions indeed in this article are so staggering that it cannot be seriously judged as a review of anything apart from the author's blinkered and academic tastes.

I agree however with Peter Levi that little magazines "deserve and need far more attention," but they can hardly take much encouragement from spurious reviews such as this. Peter Levi should forget his raped reserve—daring phrase—and go and talk to somebody who is desperate enough to have started a little magazine of his own. I should be delighted to make the necessary introductions.

Ipswich

MICHAEL BUTLER

I AM SORRY to have made Mr. Butler so cross. My article was of course by no means exhaustive. I had to decide against certain magazines because they were too esoteric, too ephemeral, or simply too elusive, and I am sure there must exist others I have never heard of at all. Of those Mr. Butler mentions, *New Departures* is too irregular, *Encore* is outside my competence, and the *Twentieth Century* is not exactly literary. One or two of the others seemed to me less interesting than the ones I chose to write about.

But may I take the opportunity of Mr. Butler's letter to apologise most contritely for my apparently slighting reference to *Stand*? When I wrote my review, I had been led to believe *Stand* was dead, so that the offensive-looking phrase "poor old *Stand*" originally ran "poor old *Stand*, another recent casualty." When I discovered at the last moment that *Stand* was still alive, it was too late to review it: all I could do was have the reference to its death cut out of the article, and in this way, alas, I substituted an insult for an inaccuracy.

PETER LEVI

AUTHORS

MAX HAYWARD writes: "Not much is known about **Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn**. He refuses to give interviews to either foreign or Soviet journalists and wants only the sort of privacy, far from the big cities, sought by the hero of his new semi-autobiographical story, *Matryona's Home*. The bare facts of his life are as follows: he was born in 1918 in Rostov-on-Don of intellectual parents, graduated in mathematics at Rostov University, and served as an officer in the artillery during the last war. He was arrested in East Prussia in 1945, spent eight years in Soviet forced labour camps, was released in 1953, but was only re-habilitated and allowed to return from exile in 1956 when he settled in a village near Ryazan as a teacher of mathematics and physics. His hobbies are photography, and riding around Russia on a bicycle. . .

"He is embarrassed by the publicity about his novel *One Day* (written four years ago, but allowed to appear in print only in November last year "by permission of the Central Committee of the CPSU") and, although he has given up school teaching for literature, he intends to go on living in the same village near Ryazan. He is now engaged on a play and is rumoured to be writing verse, as well as another novel based on his experiences in concentration camps. . .

"His place in current Soviet literature is somewhat anomalous. Thanks to the patronage of Alexander Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novyy Mir*, who apparently succeeded in obtaining Khrushchev's permission for the publication of *One Day*, he has been exempted from criticism of this work and even singled out for praise in recent speeches by Ilichev and Khrushchev himself. This is very odd in view of the current campaign against writers who portray Soviet reality, both past and present, in excessively 'dark colours'. Nobody has portrayed life under Stalin in darker colours than Solzhenitsyn. One must assume that the exception made for Solzhenitsyn is due to the fact that the approval of the Party Presidium (which was apparently divided on the wisdom of publication) is sacrosanct even though it plainly contradicts the new line as applied to other authors. If *One Day* is a 'good' work, however, *Matryona's Home* is a 'bad' work. It has been attacked in the Soviet press for 'pessimism' and for implying that there has been no progress in the life of the peasants under the Soviet régime. . .

"This story shows that Solzhenitsyn's extraordinary literary talents were not exhausted in *One Day*. His most remarkable quality is his understanding of ordinary people as they really are and his ability to catch the intonation of their language in an authentic way which contrasts vividly with the artificial 'folksiness' of much Soviet writing."

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PROTOTYPICAL HUMOUR

I SAY! I SAY! I SAY!



I say! I say! I say!



WHAT IS IT THAT
WE TAKE ON
WHEN WE TAKE OFF?



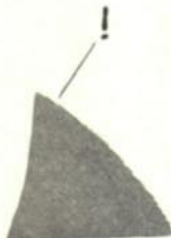
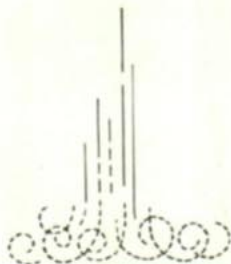
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when we take off?



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